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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON HOW PRINCIPALS ENCOURAGE GOOD TEACHING

BY

©

RICHARD IAN PAYNE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL 1993

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ISBN 0-315-88314-6

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **TEACHERS' VIEWS ON HOW PRINCIPALS ENCOURAGE GOOD TEACHING** submitted by **RICHARD IAN PAYNE** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF EDUCATION**.

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SEPTEMBER 17th, 1993

ABSTRACT

There are many perspectives on the efforts of principals to foster instructional excellence in their schools. In order to develop a greater understanding of the impact that school-based administrators have on teaching practices, this study investigated the meanings and values that eight teachers associated with their principals' actions.

The study was based on the interpretive research paradigm using semi-structured interviews to gather the data. In keeping with the inquiry's emergent design, open-ended questions were used to guide the progression of the interviews, and participants were encouraged to relate their stories freely in an unrestricted dialogue. The categories and themes stemming from an analysis of the data were shared with the respondents and other teachers in order to affirm the trustworthiness of the findings.

The teachers held varied meanings for their principals' actions, and they revealed a broad spectrum of opinions as to which factors influence instructional practices. The participants described a number of measures that they believed created a foundation for good teaching, and they discussed the impact that their administrators' actions had on them personally as well as on their work with students. Teachers explained that their principals' activities significantly shaped the working environment in the school, and the administrators' personal characteristics and orientation to the job were identified as important determinants of their actions. For the teachers in the study, effective principals not only ensured that good teaching was occurring in the classrooms, but they worked hard to establish and maintain conditions throughout the school which were conducive to instructional excellence.

Embedded within the data were five themes which gave further insight into the meanings teachers associated with the principals' actions: (a) principals as heros and villains, (b) the importance of the school as a workplace, (c) the desire for professional autonomy, (d) the need to feel valued, and (e) the need to feel supported.

In summary, the study revealed numerous conceptions of what principals do to establish and sustain good teaching practices, and the teachers' stories bore testimony to the "multiple realities" existing in today's schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge a number of individuals whose contributions helped make the completion of this thesis possible.

First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Haughey, for her patience, understanding, and willingness to lend a listening ear as I journeyed through the process of writing this document. At all stages of the research, her thoughtful comments and helpful suggestions were a tremendous benefit, and I have learned much from her guidance.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank the other members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Bill Maynes and Dr. Jean Clandinin, whose positive remarks and editorial suggestions I greatly appreciated.

This project would not have been possible without the interest and cooperation of the eight teachers who participated in the study. I am indebted to these individuals who so freely gave of their time and energy to contribute their thoughts and opinions on the research topic. I found our conversations to be stimulating, challenging, reassuring, thought-provoking, and entertaining, and I am grateful for the enriching experience of having worked with these people.

I would also like to acknowledge the words of support and encouragement extended by my family, friends, and colleagues during my studies at the university. Their confidence in my abilities provided a steady source of inspiration in my work.

Finally, my deepest thanks and appreciation are reserved for my wife and best friend Nancy, whose love, support, and encouragement sustained me throughout the year away from home, and during the many long hours of editing and polishing the final document. I am eternally grateful for her unfailing selflessness and patience which made the task of balancing school, home, and studies much easier.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1
    - Statement of the Problem 2
    - Significance of the Study 2
    - Assumptions 3
    - Limitations 4
    - Delimitations 4
    - Organization of the Thesis 5
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 6
    - Research on Effective Principals 6
    - Principals as Instructional Leaders and Supervisors of Instruction 15
    - Administrators' Actions: Teachers' Perspectives 25
        - Personal and Professional Qualities 26
        - Job Satisfaction 28
        - Perspectives on Leadership 32
    - Summary 38
3. RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN 41
    - Research Design 41
    - Participant Selection 41
    - Data Collection 43
    - Data Analysis 45
    - Trustworthiness 46
    - Summary 47

4. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA 48

The Principal and Vision 49

The Visionary Principal 49

Defining the Boundaries 52

Team Building 53

The Principal and Teaching 61

High Expectations 61

Knowledge of the Curriculum 65

Monitoring and Evaluating 68

Being Visible 74

Staff Development 76

The Principal as Educator 80

The Principal as Teacher 81

The Hard Worker/Leading by Example 83

The Principal Gives Assistance 86

The Principal and Discipline 89

The Principal and Climate 91

Recognition of Teachers' Efforts 92

Teacher Morale 95

Building Trust and Respect 99

Listen to Us! 102

The Principal and Leadership 106

Drawing a Line, or Closing the Gap? 106

By the Book 108

The Principal and the Job 109

Approachability 110

Personality 112

Professionalism 114

Virtues 116

Themes 117

Heros and Villains 118

School as Workplace 119

Professional Autonomy 120

The Need to Feel Valued 121

The Need to Feel Supported 122

Summary 123

5. SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS 125

Summary of the Study 125

Purpose 125

Research Method and Design 125

Major Findings 127

Categories 127

Themes 129

Reflections on the Literature 130

Personal Reflections 137

Implications for Practice 141

Implications for Future Research 144

Conclusion 145

REFERENCES 146

APPENDICES

A. Correspondence 153

B. Transcript Excerpts 157

C. Reflective Journal Excerpts 161

D. Summary of Preliminary Data Analysis 165

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Education in Alberta has undergone sweeping transformation in the last 90 years. As the province's population grew, so too did its educational needs. Numerous tiny school districts evolved into larger units of administration, and the roles of those working in schools underwent similar dramatic changes.

There is really no reason to expect that the metamorphosis of Alberta's schools won't continue over the next 90 years and beyond. Historically, our educational system has been shaped by social, political, and economic events which have molded it into its present form. Current pressures to adapt to a global economy and shifting requirements in the workforce virtually guarantee a continued evolution of that process.

In recent years, educational policies in Alberta have come under closer scrutiny, resulting in government initiatives designed to improve the quality of students' education, increase the accountability of teachers, and promote academic excellence -- all with the aim of laying a "foundation for a healthy economy and a vibrant society" (Alberta Education, 1992, p. i). With increased attention focused on student achievement and teacher performance, the instructional leadership role of principals firmly stations them at the forefront of contemporary educational issues. How principals inspire instructional improvement in an era when our conceptions of leadership are changing (Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1991) gives rise to a question concerning what it is that school-based administrators actually do to encourage and sustain good teaching practices.

The objective of this thesis was to explore this question from teachers' perspectives and to uncover the meanings they associate with the actions of the principal. It is intended that the insight gained will enrich readers' understanding of the complex dynamics of daily school life, and will serve to further our knowledge of leadership behaviour and its effects.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis was to explore what school-based administrators do to sustain good teaching practices. By examining the problem from teachers' perspectives and uncovering the diversity of their views, I hoped to develop a greater understanding of the meanings and values that they hold for the principals' actions. As an interpretive study the question specifically asked was:

What actions of the principal do teachers identify as being important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices?

In addition to this major query, the research questions listed below were used to help guide the investigation.

1. What direct and indirect strategies does the principal use on a day to day basis?
2. How does the educational philosophy of the principal influence teaching practices in the school?
3. How do the principal's teaching expertise and knowledge of the curriculum influence supervisory practices in the school?
4. What actions of the principal do teachers identify as important in establishing trust with staff members in the school?

Although these questions served as an initial guide to the research, they underwent refinement as the data-collection progressed.

Significance of the Study

The value of this study's contribution to the literature lies in its qualitative underpinnings. By grounding the stories in the data, and using thick description to present the findings, readers have been provided the rich detail they need to help them gain greater insight into the problem. The results of this thesis should be of interest to both school-based administrators and educators in general who wish to learn more about the various meanings that teachers hold for the actions of the principal.

The study provides insights into the teacher-administrator interactions that take place in schools on a daily basis. Aspiring administrators may develop greater awareness of the "multiple realities" existing in schools by reading the teachers' stories in this document. Similarly, instructors of graduate-level educational administration courses may be able to draw on the research for their principal-preparation classes.

Teachers might develop a greater sense of the prolific demands administrators face daily by examining the diversity of views presented in this report. In that capacity, the thesis may assist in strengthening teacher-principal relationships.

The findings of the study may also be helpful to experienced principals who wish to draw comparisons between their own administrative behaviours and those of others.

The thesis provided a "voice" for some teachers who might not have otherwise expressed their viewpoints so openly. By tapping into this information source, principals can become more aware of teachers' feelings on the subject. Consequently administrators may be more effective in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices if they are more cognizant of teachers' opinions about principals' actions.

Assumptions

A major assumption I made was that teachers would have views pertaining to those actions of the principal that they saw having an influence on teaching practices. A second assumption was that they would be willing to express those views if approached.

Furthermore, I assumed that participants would be honest and forthright in their responses, and that they would be able to recall events and articulate them in a manner appropriately free of distortion.

In conducting this study, I also made the assumption that I had the skills required to carry out the research successfully.

Limitations

The data-collection for this thesis was limited by the teachers' comfort level and willingness to be candid during the in-depth interviews. As a means of addressing this concern, and with the view that richer qualitative data would result, I selected participants for the study who were known to me before the project was undertaken.

My ability to conduct interviews with the participants, and to analyze the data uncovered was another limitation. Prior to carrying out the inquiry I was briefly involved as a researcher interviewing teachers for the Teacher Evaluation Policy Impact (TEPI) study as part of the requirements for Dr. Linda LaRocque's Ed Adm 532 course. The field work afforded me the opportunity to refine my interviewing skills -- preparation which was very beneficial when it came time to engage in my own research.

The third limitation of the study was the possibility of bias due to my inexperience as a researcher and the use of respondents who were known to me. To alleviate this problem, emphasis was given to following procedures that would uphold the trustworthiness of the investigation. A comprehensive description of the measures that were taken in this regard can be found in the third chapter.

Recognizing that the study was also limited by the participants' ability to recall and accurately recount events from the past, they were asked to examine the transcripts after a period of reflection. This action served the dual purpose of having them verify the content, as well as encouraging them to furnish additional information or to expand on previously-made comments.

Delimitations

In order to keep the study to manageable proportions, the number of participants was delimited to eight experienced teachers who had each worked with more than one principal in their career. A further delimitation was the 3 month period allotted for the collection of data through the use of in-depth interviews. In keeping with the descriptive and exploratory nature of the inquiry, no attempts were made to develop generalizations from the data that were gathered -- the final delimitation of the study.

Organization of the Thesis

The various components of the thesis have been organized into five chapters. Chapter One contains a description of the problem being researched, and sets out the questions that were used to guide the study. The assumptions that were made in conducting the research are also outlined in the first chapter, and so are the limitations and delimitations of the investigation. A comprehensive review of the relevant literature is presented in the second chapter. The research design is described in Chapter Three, as are the specific methods that were employed in carrying out the inquiry. The findings of the study are detailed in the fourth chapter, and Chapter Five comprises the reflections and implications arising from the research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is a growing body of research and academic writing which is pertinent to a study of this nature. The literature reviewed in this chapter presents an overview of those works whose topics have particular relevance for this thesis: research on effective principals, studies of instructional leadership and supervision, and research into teachers' perspectives of administrators' actions.

The first section of the review explores the research on effective principals, and the literature arising from studies examining principals at work. A great deal has been written about instructional leadership, the supervision of instruction, and about what principals *should be doing* in order to become instructional leaders. These works provide the focus for the second section of the review. The third part of the review outlines the research into teachers' perspectives on the work and actions of school-based administrators. The literature relating studies into teachers' job satisfaction is presented, as are the publications examining their views on the principals' leadership, and the administrators' personal and professional qualities.

Research on Effective Principals

Much has been written about the principalship since the late 1970s, largely as a result of the effective schools research. Early works tended to be of a normative and prescriptive nature, rather than describing what it is that principals of schools actually do to establish conditions that promote students' learning. More recent investigations have emphasized the development of a greater understanding of principals' actions in their instructional leadership role (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Morris, Crowson, Porter-Gehrie, & Hurwitz, 1984; Weber, 1987). Of these, a growing number record the day-to-day behaviour of principals, and "yield substantive data about the kinds of problems principals face and the various ways in which they respond to these problems" (Bookbinder, 1992, p. 21). Such descriptive studies have shed new light on the field of educational administration: "Studies of principals at work indicate that the real world of school administration is often quite different from the world described in the theoretical literature and in principals' preferences" (Sergiovanni, 1991, pp. 23-24).

There is now an abundance of evidence to support the view that principals have a significant influence over what happens in schools (Leithwood et al., 1990; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992; Ogawa & Hart, 1985). Authors such as Oliva (1989), for example, have equated effective schools with effective leadership by the principal:

> The effective schools research has identified schoolwide characteristics similar to those demonstrated by effective teachers, namely, maintenance of an orderly school climate, high expectations for students and staff, emphasis on academics, monitoring of student progress and one additional and very important ingredient -- strong leadership by the principal. (p. 121)

Numerous studies devoted to the exploration of the effective leadership strategies of successful administrators have uncovered a tremendous diversity of approaches. The extensive list of over 300 "effective" principal behaviours developed by Russell, Mazzarella, White, and Maurer (1985) serves as a prime example. In addition, the literature reveals remarkable differences in the actual impact of principals' actions, variations which Leithwood et al. (1992) contend are due largely to

> differences in the nature of the principals' practices. Such practices usually conform to one of four broad patterns or styles, each with a different primary focus: a *student development* focus, a *program improvement* focus, a *climate* or interpersonal focus, and a *building management* focus. (p. 285)

Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, and Thurston (1992) reviewed three major qualitative studies on the principalship to help illustrate the diversity of ways that administrators can approach the role of instructional leader. After comparing the work of Wolcott (1973), Lightfoot (1983), and Dwyer (1986), Sergiovanni and his colleagues cited Lieberman and Miller (1984) to conclude that it was important for principals to develop a relationship with their teachers that conveys a "sense of order and some sense of how well they are doing in their work" (Sergiovanni et al., 1992, p. 312). Taking a position similar to that of Dwyer (1984, 1986), the authors went on to say that principals must decide on the combination of leadership behaviours to use depending upon the specific context in which they find themselves.

Dwyer, Barnett, and Lee (1987) spent two years studying principals identified as "successful" instructional leaders to discover what they do in that capacity. Their findings yielded nine categories of routine behaviours in which these principals engaged:

1. Goal setting and planning
2. Monitoring
3. Evaluating
4. Exchanging information
5. Scheduling, allocating resources, and organizing
6. Staffing
7. Modeling
8. Governing
9. Filling in. (p. 32)

The authors reported that principals spent most of their time exchanging information, and that activities in categories two, five, and eight comprised the bulk of the remaining observations. They obtained "a nearly identical profile" (p. 32) of the principals' actions from an analysis of the teachers' interview data.

Similar results were attained by Morris et al. (1984) in an attempt to develop a better understanding of what principals do from day to day. Their findings showed that the principal ran the school primarily by talking with others, and that the administrators' days were characterized by "frequent and abrupt shifts from one concern to another" (p. 209). The researchers discovered that principals did not allocate much time to supervising teachers, instead they spent more time overseeing the school, maintaining contact with parents, or dealing with matters such as discipline:

> Principals seemed to believe that these non-supervisory activities were important supports for student achievement. An implicit division of labour was in effect: teachers were responsible for presenting lessons and getting students to pay attention and participate in learning activities. The principal supervised the teachers, but was also responsible for establishing and maintaining in the school building a tone that was supportive of the learning activity. (p. 94)

In two articles, Walker (1989, 1990) described a study in which "award-winning" principals were shadowed as they went about their work. The research led to the identification of 12 "essential" administrator proficiencies exhibited by all the principals:

1. Problem analysis
2. Judgement
3. Organizational ability
4. Decisiveness
5. Leadership
6. Sensitivity
7. Stress tolerance
8. Oral communication
9. Written communication
10. Range of interest
11. Personal motivation
12. Educational values. (1990, p. 48)

As he detailed the indicators observed within each skill category, Walker explained that the proficiencies were "inextricably related," and that principals' actions were often indicative of several skill areas. His observations also led him to develop his own definition of a successful principal. Walker's portrait included a great many descriptors of what in his view exemplary principals do in interactions with staff, students, and the community:

> This leader cares about students, faculty and parents. Thank yous and notes of appreciation are daily occurrences. Decisions are made democratically; teachers are empowered. Because the principal is honest, hardworking, fair and consistent, trust and credibility are established. Structure and organization are apparent. Perhaps more importantly he or she is a human being, and by daily actions

> demonstrates a caring for all school people -- students, teachers and parents. (1989, p. 26)

McEvoy (1987) also studied principals' actions, but focussed on those routine behaviours that influenced teachers' professional growth. She discovered that the majority of the principals' daily activities centred on communicating, a finding, supported by several other researchers (Dwyer et al., 1987; Martin & Willower, 1981; Morris et al., 1984; and others), which emphasized the importance of the day-to-day informal interactions that take place between the principal and teacher. By analyzing the data from the Far West study (Dwyer, 1984), McEvoy highlighted six ways in which principals influence the professional development of their teachers:

1. Informing teachers of professional opportunities.
2. Disseminating professional and curriculum materials.
3. Focusing staff attention on a specific theme.
4. Soliciting teachers' opinions.
5. Encouraging experimentation.
6. Recognizing individual teachers' achievements. (p. 73)

She concluded by stating that the research suggests

> that principals can actually stimulate and reinforce professional growth within their schools -- for individual teachers and their staffs as a whole. Principals in the study persuaded teachers to reflect on their teaching processes, attend workshops, take advantage of opportunities in their communities, experiment with new ideas, and learn from each other. Through their daily interactions, these principals used their brief and fragmented communications to encourage and inspire teachers. (p. 76)

The search for what principals do daily to "develop and maintain effective instructional programs" was the aim of the often-quoted Far West Laboratory study (Dwyer, 1984, p. 32). The research revealed that principals' "personal traits, experience, training and beliefs" (p. 35) had a significant influence over what they chose to do as instructional leaders, as did the "community." Dwyer reported many diverse and successful approaches to instructional leadership being practiced in schools:

> We found no single image or simple formula for successful instructional leadership. We did find principals engaged in effective, routine acts that required no new

> programs, innovations, or extensive changes in their roles. Their successes hinged on their capacity to connect these routine activities to their overarching perspectives of the contexts of their schools and their aspirations for their students. (p. 33)

Although they used many different strategies, principals were observed following two major approaches to their duties. One focussed on improving the technical aspects of coordinating and delivering instruction, and the other avenue was designed to improve the school climate. Dwyer commented: "We suggest that the elements of *climate* influence students' and staff members' feelings and expectations about the school, and that *instructional organization* delivers the reality" (p. 36). In sum, principals were seen playing an important role in shaping effective schools.

Weber (1987) drew on recent research that investigated principals' actions as instructional leaders to conclude that it was a combination of personal traits and management strategies that they used to influence the schools' instructional programs. Like Dwyer (1984), and De Bevoise (1984), he emphasized that successful administrators have a diverse range of personal characteristics, and he stated that such principals influence "the school environment, first through modes of behaviour that encourage positive learning outcomes, and second through routine activities that make their work reliable and visible" (Weber, 1987, p. 10).

Smith and Andrews (1989) examined the role of principals as instructional leaders and discovered that time management was an important factor in determining their success.

> Our attempts to understand what the average principal does every day and what principals who are considered to be instructional leaders do every day suggest that principals who are instructional leaders are able to organize their day so they focus their time and attention on instructional matters rather than the routine matters of running the school. Thus the issue for the average principal is not misplaced values but a poor allocation of discretionary time, or simply poor behavioural patterns. (p. 29)

Their findings revealed that effective principals were "both strong building managers and strong instructional leaders" (p. 29), and they nurtured quality education by making teaching and learning their primary focus.

As a result of their study, Smith and Andrews concluded that the size of the school has some bearing on how principals spend their time, but that principals in elementary or secondary school do not have different values about what is important in their job, or have different views about how they should be spending their time. (pp. 22-23)

In a review of the research conducted on the principalship in the past decade, Leithwood et al. (1990) proposed a framework which they felt was central to developing a better understanding of principals' practices. They contended that "descriptions of overt behaviour -- however 'effective' such behaviour might be" (p. 5) were insufficient for developing an adequate understanding of principals' actions. Their framework, similar to the one described by Dwyer (1984), suggested that principals' practices are influenced most by the way in which they have interpreted their environment:

> Principals have been observed to engage in quite distinct patterns of practice . . . shaped by how they think about their work. Three or four such patterns are particularly evident among North American principals, and these factors have demonstrated widely varying impacts on classroom practices or factors . . . and factors within the school but outside the classroom. . . . It is primarily through such influence that principals affect pupils and others . . ., although some aspects of their practices are more direct than others in their impact. (Leithwood et al., 1990, p. 6)

In examining studies that provided information about administrators' practices, the authors identified four general leadership styles exhibited by principals. The first style concentrated on interpersonal relationships and establishing a positive climate in the school. The second style focussed on a variety of behaviours intended to improve student achievement and well-being, whereas a programme focus was the aim of the third style. The final style was "characterized by almost exclusive attention to what is often labelled 'administrivia' -- the nuts and bolts of daily school organization and maintenance" (p. 13).

The authors noted that much of the research since the mid-1970s has concentrated on the actions of successful principals. The most frequently identified strategies used by effective administrators included: "monitoring student progress; teacher evaluation and supervision; establishing and enforcing an equitable disciplinary code; and maintaining a positive school climate" (p. 16).

One of the studies reviewed by Leithwood and his colleagues, and included in their synthesis of leadership styles described above, was that of Hall, Rutherford, Hord, and Huling (1984). Their research documented the daily behaviours of principals and defined three administrative change facilitator styles: Initiator, Manager, and Responder. A significant finding of the study was that teachers in schools with principals who used the Manager style viewed the climate as more favourable. The main characteristics of each style are embedded in the explanation for the teachers' views given by the authors:

> The most straightforward interpretation is that Manager style principals protect their teachers and strive to keep everything running smoothly. Thus teachers are more satisfied. Initiator style principals listen to their teachers but have high expectations and keep pushing. The constant pressure is not as well liked. Principals using the Responder style are most concerned about teachers' feelings and perceptions but tend to respond to them one at a time without coordinated or consistent communication and priorities. Thus teachers feel more job ambiguity and less control. (p. 27)

In assessing the different styles, the authors noted that all three could be termed "effective," so it was therefore important to consider the criteria used to judge their effectiveness.

A recent study by McElwain (1989) explored eight principals' understandings of their actions as instructional supervisors. The respondents described several major activities in which they engaged in that capacity: observing teachers formally and informally, being visible within the school, setting clear expectations, providing the resources and support needed to facilitate instruction, encouraging the involvement of others, and promoting teacher professional growth. The findings underscored the significance of the principals' everyday acts as delineated in other studies (Dwyer, 1984; McEvoy, 1987) -- a point reiterated in a later discussion of the interview data (Haughey & McElwain, 1992). These authors reported that "underlying the categories is the notion of developing and sustaining a culture whose expectations would be the heartbeat of the school, one which would be sustained through talk and the everyday acts of the participants" (p. 116). Citing the work of Greenfield (1986) and Daresh (1991) they concluded that the principals' actions as instructional supervisors in the McElwain (1989) study were intricately entwined with their daily routines and were not viewed as being a separate entity.

Leithwood (1990) examined the principals' role in teacher development and he stressed that teacher development is more effectively achieved when principals use informal approaches rather than "formal, hard-to-implement strategies" (p. 84). He described how effective principals capitalized on the "momentum" of their everyday responses at work to channel energies toward teacher development. Principals using a consistent set of criteria upon which to base their decisions and actions were able to avoid having the results of their many daily decisions working at cross-purposes:

> As a result, the effects of the many seemingly trivial, unrelated, and often unanticipated decisions made by these principals eventually add up to something. Their impact accumulates in a way that consistently fosters school improvement. And what is the glue that holds together the myriad decisions of highly effective principals? It is the goals that they and their staff have developed for their schools and a sense of what their schools need to look like and to do in order to accomplish those goals. (p. 85)

Respondents equated schools' overall effectiveness with the administrators' leadership in a study of school and principal effectiveness in Alberta (Johnson, 1989). Teachers', principals', parents', and superintendents' perceptions were explored through in-depth interviews, and five criteria for assessing the principals' effectiveness as a leader were uncovered. Those who were interviewed indicated that it was important for the principal to specify "meaningful objectives" for their schools, and to ensure "that all staff members are aware of and guided by those statements of intent" (p. 17). The principals' ability to guide the school toward those important educational objectives was also discussed. Termed "capable leadership," it meant judging the principals' effectiveness "according to their instructional direction, administrative organization of staff, and maintenance of an appropriate school environment through student discipline" (p. 17). A third area discussed by interviewees indicated that effective principals promoted on-going professional development, had high expectations of their teachers, and generated enthusiasm within their staff. It was also important for principals to efficiently manage their administrative tasks, assign teaching and other responsibilities appropriately, and to be aware of and involved in planning for instruction. Subsumed within these points was a concern that budgets be managed to reflect the curricular goals. The final criteria highlighted the importance of establishing effective communication and rapport both in and out of the school. The "frequent and amicable associations" (p. 18) between principal and teacher were singled-out as "an avenue by which principals can 'create a desirable educational culture' at school" (p. 18).

Interest in what principals do in their role continues to inspire numerous studies (e.g., Campbell & Williamson, 1991; Chung & Miskel, 1989; Myrick Short & Jones, 1991; Schmuck & Schmuck, 1990) which serve to expand our knowledge base. Past research has enriched the literature in educational administration with countless metaphors attempting to describe the various roles of the principal. These range from descriptions of principals as managers, instructional leaders, supervisors, and evaluators (McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988; Oliva, 1989; Wise, Darling-Hammond, McLaughlin, & Bernstein, 1984), to conductors of symphonies (Isherwood & Achoka, 1991; Moorthy, 1992; Wentzell, 1991), and glue (Glickman, 1990). The phrases used to describe the work of principals have undergone a steady evolution. The contemporary label "instructional leadership" seems to have risen above the agglomeration of theories and descriptors as a more all-encompassing concept. Whether or not Glickman's (1992) assertion that the historical understanding of the word "supervision" is obsolescent, it still enjoys widespread use in the existing body of literature. Hence instructional leadership and supervision are examined concurrently in the following section, for although the terms can hold different meanings, the activities they suggest are not always unassociated.

Principals as Instructional Leaders and Supervisors of Instruction

Instructional leadership has been defined in many ways, but the interpretation given by De Bevoise (1984) seems to capture most of the elements offered by other writers. He stated that instructional leadership encompasses

> those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others, to promote growth in student learning. Generally such actions focus on setting schoolwide goals, defining the purpose of schooling, providing the resources needed for learning to occur, supervising and evaluating teachers, coordinating staff development programs, and creating collegial relationships with and among teachers. (p. 15)

A perceived need to be able to assess what it is principals do as instructional leaders has led to the development of instruments designed specifically to appraise their activities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Hallinger, Murphy, Weil, Mesa, & Mitman, 1983; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1986). Four levels of increasingly effective leadership behaviour were identified in the research by Leithwood and Montgomery (1986). They defined principal effectiveness as "making gains on behalf of students" (p. 7) in terms of their achievement and self-direction. Level one leaders -- "Administrators" -- hold the belief that teachers are responsible for teaching, and that running the school is the principal's duty. "The main goal of these principals is to run a 'smooth ship'" (p. 24), which means they chiefly focus their attention on the day-to-day operation of the school and other non-classroom factors. Level two principals -- "Humanitarians" -- devote their energies to influencing factors that have a direct bearing on the interpersonal relationships between staff members, and between teachers and students. They are concerned with developing a positive school climate because they "believe that the basis of a sound education is a 'good' environment in the school" (p. 41). The authors labelled the third level of principals "Program Managers." These individuals "view their role as providing the best programs possible for students" (p. 61) by focussing on concerns of curriculum, instruction, and evaluation. As a consequence these principals need to be knowledgeable about effective instructional practices. Program Managers tend to be more restrained by established guidelines and procedures than the fourth level of principals -- "Systematic Problem Solvers." Leithwood and Montgomery characterize these principals as the most effective. They have complex goals for the students and try to do whatever is necessary in order to achieve them. Termed "bottom liners" by the authors,

> their focus is largely unconstrained by established practice, and their client orientation leads them to the invention and delivery of whatever legitimate services are likely to realize the goals held by their schools for students. Systematic Problem Solvers are distinguished by their ability to see the relationship between the most mundane decisions and the growth of students. As a consequence, they are able to introduce unusually high levels of consistency into school decision-making. This consistency permits greater accumulation of impact on student growth than happens in schools with less effective principals. (p. 83)

Leithwood and Montgomery emphasized that what principals do at each level is more effective than the preceding one, but that at different times, and under certain circumstances, behaviour from each level would be appropriate.

After reviewing the descriptive studies of principals' work, Duke (1987) proposed a model of instructional leadership based on what he termed "situational competence":

> It is apparent that instructional leadership is a relatively complex phenomenon involving a mixture of activities directly or indirectly related to instructional improvement. No one pattern of behaviours characterizes all successful instructional leaders. Thus it may be useful to think of instructional leadership in terms of key situations that must be handled competently for effective teaching to be possible. (p. 80)

He identified seven situations that principals must be prepared to deal with as instructional leaders: teacher supervision and development, teacher evaluation, instructional management and support, resource management, quality control, coordination, and troubleshooting (p. 81). Duke emphasized that there is no single prescription for handling the situations because the circumstances surrounding each one will be widely different. Principals have to use their skills and exercise their professional judgement as to how best to tackle the issues within their context.

Saphier and King (1985) identified the strengthening of teachers' skills as an important element in school improvement. In their view, certain school cultural norms must be in place in order to nurture significant improvements in instruction. They used the metaphor of a garden to describe how "good seeds" need "strong cultures" to grow and flourish. In their view, the twelve norms affecting school improvement are:

1. Collegiality.
2. Experimentation.

3. High expectations.
4. Trust and confidence.
6. Reaching out to the knowledge base.
7. Appreciation and recognition.
8. Caring, celebration, and humour.
9. Involvement in decision making.
10. Protection of what's important.
11. Traditions.
12. Honest, open communication. (p. 67)

The authors contended that teachers and administrators must work together to strengthen these norms, but that strong leadership is a necessary prerequisite. They built on Sergiovanni's (1984) five leadership forces and asserted that principals show the skills for all the forces through the same activities. Therefore, symbolic and culture-building skills are not separate activities:

> Cultures are built through the everyday business of school life. It is the way business is handled that both forms and reflects the culture. Leaders with culture-building on their minds bring an ever-present awareness of these cultural norms to their daily interactions, decisions, and plans, thus shaping the way events take place. (Saphier & King, 1985, p. 72)

Comparable with Johnson (1989), Saphier and King concluded that school improvement efforts have a better chance of succeeding if strong cultures are built which promote growth and make school an appealing place to be.

Bird and Little (1985) studied instructional leadership in secondary schools and found a diverse range of behaviours used by successful principals. Focussing on those actions which influenced the prevailing norms in schools, they identified some basic acts that encouraged improvement of instruction. According to the authors, their findings indicated that effective school leaders

> describe a desired practice explicitly, clearly, and affirmatively, and call for the use of that practice when it applies. They enact or model the desired practice themselves, in situations analogous to the classroom (e.g., inservice training), or in

> demonstration teaching, or in the usual course of business. They reward the staff's use of a practice by praising them; by devoting more time and energy to them, their interests, and their needs; and by working to expand their opportunities and rewards. (§S, p. 19)

Like other writers (e.g., McEvoy, 1987), they too discussed how conditions that fostered improved teaching were influenced by the day to day routines of life at school. The norms of collegiality and experimentation were molded in the course of teachers' daily work and their interactions with each other and the administrators. The norms "appear to be maintained (or not) by the specific nature of administrators' announced expectations, their routine allocation of administrative resources and rewards, [and] their daily encounters with teachers in meetings, classrooms, and hallways" (Bird & Little, 1985, §4, p. 5). Coupled with this, principals would drop in and out of classes to establish their presence and to remain generally visible about the school. They tended to trust that experienced teachers were carrying out their duties competently.

The importance of "vision" in instructional leadership has been emphasized by a number of authors (e.g., Grant, 1989; LeSourd & Grady, 1991; Lightfoot, 1983; Neiuber, 1989). In general terms, principals with vision help everyone maintain an on-going sense of direction by providing a focus towards which the school can work.

> A fundamental assumption is that with vision as a guiding force the principal has significant leverage to create or take full advantage of future opportunities to improve student learning. The principal is also able to project what an effective school or program should become and to determine what needs to be done to transform that vision into a reality. (Grant, 1989, p. 21)

Discussing how the principal's vision and the clarity of the school's mission are revealed through everyday events, Petrie (1991) commented that staff members are not easily fooled by ineffective administrators. Borrowing a term from Postman and Winegartner (1969), he said:

> Teachers and students have excellent "crap detectors." They intuitively know if school space, resources, time, and people are organized to accentuate the school mission of teaching and learning. They know if you trust and respect them, and if responsibility for teaching and learning are guiding principles for whatever choices are made. (Petrie, 1991, p. 46)

Frase and Melton (1992) contended that in order to become more effective as instructional leaders, principals need to commit to being "with the people" (p. 17) in the school. In their view, this is best accomplished through the use of the Management by Wandering Around (MBWA) technique. In discussing the positive benefits of MBWA, the authors explained how MBWA principals "establish people as their number one priority" (p. 19), and model behaviours such as being good listeners, being open and honest, and making sure their actions match their stated values -- all of which send explicit signals to teachers about their values and expectations. MBWA principals controlled their time and used it efficiently to accomplish their objectives, and the authors related how leading by example and being in classrooms were also important attributes of these principals. "Our observations are that teachers who work with principals who lead by example are more open about their professional growth needs and more active in pursuing professional growth activities" (p. 22). Frase and Melton went on to say that conducting demonstration lessons for teachers was yet another important way that principals fostered participatory management and gained teachers' respect:

> Teachers respond in highly positive ways when they see their instructional leader in a teaching role. Teaching provides an opportunity for the principal to model effective instructional practices, make suggestions on instructional strategies for students, demonstrate personal and professional growth, and establish a climate for teachers as learners.
>
> Last, but extremely important, is establishing high expectations regarding instruction. High-quality instruction should be the norm, and all professionals in the building are teachers, regardless of their formal role or title. (pp. 22-23)

Frase and Melton asserted that principals who wander throughout the school and visit classrooms remain close to "the source of diagnostic information and solutions to problems" (p. 17).

This final point has been supported by the work of several other authors as well. Sergiovanni (1991) and Hewitt (1989), for example, both discuss the value of informal classroom visits and how they can generate "a wealth of information about what is happening" (Hewitt, 1989, pp. 19-20).

The principals' duties related to the supervision and evaluation of teachers have perhaps the greatest potential for conflict within the schools. These controversial areas engage "core institutional issues such as allocation of human and fiscal resources, role conflicts between administrators as managers and administrators as colleagues, and the generation of information about the performance of the institution" (McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988, p. 15). It is widely agreed that the main purpose of supervision and evaluation is the improvement of instruction (Goldsberry, 1984). Yet Barth's observation that "teachers favour principals most who intrude on their classrooms least" (1990, p. 50), raises for consideration important questions about how instructional supervision is to be carried out.

Wiles and Bondi (1986) defined leadership in instructional supervision as "an approach to working with people within an organization to get a job done. Persons in educational leadership roles must see their behaviours as influencing the behaviours of others, and develop an approach to leading that brings desired results" (pp. 57-58). The authors discussed how supervisors must use both managerial and interpersonal skills in order to foster instructional improvement. Wiles and Bondi divided the tasks of supervision into those that support, coordinate, or build school programs, and they pointed out that the emphasis given to each area depends on a number of factors within and outside the school. Despite the differences among supervisors, or the positions they hold in the school, eight key skills of supervision were seen as constants:

1. Aiding human development.
2. Designing and developing curriculum.
3. Improving classroom instruction.
4. Encouraging human relations.
5. Providing staff development.
6. Fulfilling administrative functions.
7. Managing change for accountability.
8. Evaluating for effectiveness. (p. 73)

There has been much discussion in the professional literature concerning the nature of instructional supervision. For example, Glickman used (1990) the metaphor of "glue" to refer to the process:

> Glue is not glamorous; neither is supervision. When glue is doing its work properly -- for example, by keeping a chair together -- it goes largely unnoticed; so does supervision, when a school is functioning well. Glue does get attention when the legs of a chair collapse, just as supervision does when a school fragments and fails. With success, both glue and supervision are taken for granted; with failure they are both held responsible (p. 5).

The elusive tasks of supervision can indeed make them difficult to examine. Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) offered some insight on the problem when they stated: "Of course, what principals produce -- the result of their work -- cannot be seen as a tangible product. But it is observable as an attitude, an élan, a kind of concern for youngsters, perhaps, that permeates a school" (p. 5).

In an earlier publication, Blumberg (1980) also drew attention to the difficulties in examining what it is that principals do in their supervisory role. He illustrated that it is important to distinguish between the supervisors' actual behaviour, and what it is that teachers perceive them doing:

> This is an important difference, for it is quite possible that discrepancies exist between behaviour itself and how it is perceived. Such discrepancies may arise from, among other things, organizational role differences, conflicts in expectations between the parties involved, and unmet needs (pp. 62-63).

Blumberg described how a virtual "private cold war" can erupt between principal and teacher because of each group's tendency to see supervision in different ways, and because communication between them is often not as open as it should be.

In his study of peer coaching and the teacher-supervisor relationship, Garmston (1989) described a scenario comparable to the one above. His findings led to the identification of three styles of principal leadership with respect to peer coaching. Termed "neglector," "resistor," and "supporter," each style tended to precipitate different teacher behaviours. Teachers described creative ways in which they circumvented the first two types of administrator and engaged in peer coaching without the principals' authorization.

Supporter principals were able to develop strong professional relations with their staff, and the teachers felt "empowered" in that type of an environment.

Barth (1990) claimed that in his view principals have little effect on teacher growth, and may, in fact inhibit the process. Finding that formal teacher evaluation had little effect on staff development, and that conventional practices often approached "a meaningless ritual" (p. 56), he suggested that traditional models of staff development be restructured so as to create a "community of learners" within the school. In his discussion, Barth noted the paramount importance of a healthy teacher-principal relationship in determining other relationships within the school. His comments highlighted a recurring theme in the literature: the challenge principals have in establishing trust with their staff members.

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) asserted that in order "to be effective, principals must develop a sense of trust and rapport with teachers. Teachers should believe that the principal is there to help them and that improving the instructional program is a mutual task shared with the principal" (p. 178). Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) pointed out that "an open and trusting relationship" (p. 136) is also important for developing common goals and to ensure that all stakeholders are able to buy-in to decisions that affect them. In a similar vein, Kottkamp (1990) associated trust with teachers' job satisfaction, which in turn had an impact on their effectiveness in the classroom.

The issue of trust most often arises in matters of supervision and evaluation. A study conducted by Bosch et al. (1985) identified trust as a key factor in determining the success of a teacher evaluation system:

> In addressing the question of who should carry out the evaluation there is overwhelming support from all groups for the idea that the principal should be the primary evaluator. . . . It is clear that other than in exceptional cases the evaluations should be carried out by an in-school administrator, preferably the principal. . . . When it comes to being evaluated teachers feel more comfortable with, and have greater confidence in, those who work closely with them and who understand the specific nature of their assignments. (pp. 70-71).

On a similar note, McLaughlin and Pfeifer (1988) also referred to the importance of trust in teacher evaluation:

> Getting started with teacher evaluation . . . is not a question of making or willing it to happen. At base, it is a question of *enabling* it to happen -- of developing the necessary trust, communication, openness, and commitment to strong evaluation. These are the enabling conditions that establish the local *evaluation culture*. (p. 15)

In a publication on teacher evaluation, Duke and Stiggins (1986) outlined the critical attributes needed by those who observe and evaluate teachers. In the authors' view, effective evaluators need to be credible, persuasive, patient, and able to inspire trust in teachers. In addition, they discussed how the supervisors' track record for giving sound advice, and their ability to model teaching skills and attitudes influenced their effectiveness.

Like other writers, Duke and Stiggins also emphasized the importance of trust in the teacher-supervisor relationship:

> The ability to inspire trust is priceless for those who would presume to suggest changes in teacher behaviour. Those who have the ability are able to deliver even the most critical feedback without jeopardizing their relationship with teachers. Those who cannot inspire trust may as well forget the goal of teacher growth. (p. 25)

Unlike most other authors, they outlined eight factors influencing the establishment of trust:

> 1. The supervisor's intentions (Do the supervisor and the teacher agree on the purpose of evaluation?).
>
> 2. Maintaining confidentiality in communication.
>
> 3. How the supervisor handles evidence of performance from sources other than the classroom (e.g., hearsay and complaints).
>
> 4. The consistency with which the supervisor applies evaluation rules and regulations.
>
> 5. The extent to which the teacher and the supervisor see themselves as partners in the school improvement effort.
>
> 6. The honesty and sincerity of interpersonal communications.
>
> 7. The extent to which the teacher has an opportunity to interpret evaluation data first before sharing it with others.
>
> 8. The extent to which the teacher participates in the selection of performance goals. (p. 25)

Trust is a murky concept. Although considerable attention has been lavished on its importance as an element in the teacher-principal relationship, relatively few writers have undertaken to explain how it is established. Trust appears to be inextricably linked with most actions of the principal, and as such would seem to figure prominently in attempts to improve teaching practices.

Instructional leadership is indeed a "complex phenomenon" (Duke, 1987) involving a multitude of activities whose aim is the betterment of students' education. The literature reveals no single clear-cut description of behaviours to be used by instructional leaders, but when examined holistically, the research offers considerable insight into their actions. Studies of instructional leadership and supervisory behaviour are on-going, and the accumulating data continues to shape our understanding of the concepts.

Debates over principals' roles and responsibilities as instructional leaders or supervisors of instruction continue to permeate the professional literature. However, attention has been increasingly focussed on alternate ways of examining the principalship. The theory of "transformational leadership," for example, is becoming a popular topic among writers (e.g., Brandt, 1992; Grimmett, Rostad, & Ford, 1992; Koermer, 1992; Leithwood, 1992; Sagar, 1992; Thomas & Vornberg, 1991). Regardless of which symbolic descriptors are used to describe the work of principals, the fact remains that the administration of schools today can be a monumental task. While attempting to satisfy a wide variety of interest groups, principals need to ensure that the schools are still providing students with a quality education.

Administrators' Actions: Teachers' Perspectives

In recent years there has been greater attention given to the opinions of teachers with respect to issues of school improvement and instructional leadership. Several authors (Cohn, Kottkamp, McCloskey, & Provenzo, 1987; Lieberman, 1988) have illustrated that such was not always the case, and Leithwood et al. (1990) pointed out that very few studies have focussed specifically on teachers' views of the principals' leadership.

A review of the literature reveals that the majority of research into teachers' perspectives has been of a quantitative nature, and that descriptive studies of the teachers' world are few and tend to be dated (e.g., Becker, 1980; Waller, 1961). Further to this, the more noteworthy descriptive studies of administrators' actions have examined them from a broader angle (e.g., Lightfoot, 1983), or have spotlighted the principals themselves (e.g., Wolcott, 1973). This notwithstanding, the growing inventory of research into teachers' opinions is beginning to paint a more complete picture of their viewpoint.

Personal and Professional Qualities

Several authors have written of the role played by perception in attempts to improve teaching practices. For example, Liftig (1990) identified a number of "myths" surrounding teachers' and administrators' views of one another, and he reasoned that surveys and interviews don't often bring them to light. "The point is not whether these myths are accurate but that most of us *believe* the dirty little secrets that we keep between us" (p. 67). Liftig expressed the view that both groups "need to honestly examine their hostile misconceptions of each other" (p. 67) if future efforts to improve schools are going to be successful.

Kirby and Blase (1991) also discussed how teachers' perceptions of principals' characteristics could have an adverse effect on collaborative efforts to improve schools. They listed "authoritarian, inaccessible, unsupportive, inequitable, inconsistent, indecisive, ambiguous with regard to expectations, egocentric, insecure, unfriendly, and aggressive" (p. 111) as those characteristics teachers associate with what they termed "closed" principals. Teachers who view their principals in this way "are likely to be wary of any efforts toward increased collaboration" (p. 111), even though the principal's vision for the school may be sound.

As part of a broader look at instructional leadership, Weber (1987) examined teachers' values. Stating that "a principal's knowledge must be credible to teachers" (p. 16), he also indicated that principals' personal characteristics influence their "decision-making processes and their style of instructional leadership" (p. 5). Drawing on other research to support his discussion of teachers' perceptions of principals' actions, he cited Ellett and Walberg's study, in which they indicated a strong relationship between teachers' views of the school environment and their assessments of the principals' behaviour. "In schools where the principal is perceived by teachers as frequently and effectively performing important behaviours in the school environment, teachers' attitudes toward a variety of work-related dimensions are positive and often show strong connections with student outcomes" (1979, p. 158).

In a study exploring teacher-principal relationships, Cole (1990) identified a number of factors that elementary teachers believed influenced those associations:

> (a) attitude towards students, (b) awareness of what is happening at the school level and in classrooms, (c) appreciation and recognition of staff members for their efforts, (d) development of two-way communication by being approachable and communicating what is happening in the school, (e) fairness in treatment of staff, (f) attitude towards teachers as professionals, and (g) extent of keeping power and control versus empowering teachers. (pp. 79-80)

Teachers in this study also revealed that it was "important to share a common philosophy" (p. 77) with the principal, and for the principal to be supportive and trusting of teachers.

Keefe, Clark, Nickerson, and Valentine (1983) solicited responses from principals, teachers, students, and parents in a number of different categories while conducting research on effective middle-level principals. With respect to personal and professional characteristics of effective principals, 58% of the teachers surveyed indicated that "the principal was a 'people person' who supports and knows students and staff members and likes young people" (p. 10). Describing the principals' job tasks, teachers said that effective principals worked long hours, were very dedicated to their schools, and were "almost always accessible" (p. 15). The authors reported that teachers generally viewed effective principals' leadership styles as high in both personal and professional dimensions.

Their findings illustrate the great diversity of the teachers' characterizations of their principals:

> When asked to describe the leadership styles of the 50 effective principals, teachers more frequently used adjectives descriptive of personality than such traditional leadership descriptors as democratic, laissez-faire, authoritarian, etc. The most prevalent responses represented principals as very humane persons (caring, friendly, responsive to needs, personal, loving, fatherly, approachable). The casual, low-key, easy-going type of personality was mentioned somewhat less frequently but about as often as the strong, no-question-who-is-boss, captain-of-the-ship personality. The principals were also described as probing, questioning, thorough, businesslike, professional, good models, persons of high expectations, facilitative, firm, fair, flexible, good listeners, positive, dynamic, patient, realistic, and trustworthy.
>
> The most common style descriptor was "democratic," with emphasis on opportunity for input but with recognition that the final decision was the principal's. When authoritarian descriptors were used, the terms were "benevolent authoritarianism," or "consultative but benign authoritarianism." (p. 16)

In addition, teachers were asked to comment on factors influencing climate and morale, including the role they saw the principal playing in promoting a "good" school climate. Keefe et al. reported that caring, respect, and recognition were seen as being important, and that participants indicated a "positive" working relationship with the principal was desirable, with an "emphasis on good communication. . . . Teachers believed the principal was *the key* to an effective climate" (p. 19).

Job Satisfaction

Issues related to school climate have been the subject of other investigations as well. Cohn (1992) and Cohn et al. (1987) related how all the teachers involved in the Dade County public schools study indicated that a number of societal changes had an impact on their daily life at school. The two major themes emerging from the interview data were that changes in student and parent attitudes, and changes in administrator attitudes and demands were the factors most responsible for the teachers' views. Focussing on administrator actions, Cohn (1992) explained that teachers were generally "feeling less 'professional'" (p. 123) because of the treatment they were receiving from school and district administrators:

> The comments from the vast majority of teachers in our sample . . . suggest that in recent years their role has changed because their autonomy and authority in decision making has diminished significantly. The examples they offered were in four key areas: keeping of students' records, teacher planning, curriculum and instruction, and teacher evaluation. (p. 124)

The author went on to say that under these circumstances, teachers found that their work became less satisfying and rewarding. These findings parallel those reported by Frymier (1987) which suggest that "the bureaucratic structure of the workplace" (p. 10) is an important determinant of teachers' motivation toward their work.

Smith and Andrews (1989) pointed out that the recent school effectiveness research "has found a powerful association between teachers' satisfaction with their professional role as classroom teachers and incremental growth in student academic achievement" (p. 2). Further to this, the authors underscored the administrators' pivotal role in influencing teachers' feelings about their workplace: "[The research] has also found that teachers' perception of the school principal as an instructional leader is the most powerful determinant of teachers' satisfaction with their professional role" (p. 2).

In a study of teacher motivation and satisfaction, Frase and Sorenson (1992) found important relationships between the following factors: (a) teachers' job satisfaction and feedback received from their principals and peers, (b) teachers' feelings of satisfaction and desire for autonomy and isolation, and (c) teachers' growth-need strength and desire for collegial relationships. Their findings illustrated that autonomy and isolation held varying levels of importance for different teachers, as did their aspiration for collegial relationships. The strongest correlation, however, was between job satisfaction and performance feedback:

> Feedback is strongly related to job satisfaction (more than all other core job characteristics), yet teachers typically receive very little accurate and helpful feedback regarding their teaching. The message is clear: Principals must establish structures in their schools to ensure that teachers are receiving adequate and regular feedback. (p. 39)

The findings presented by Cohn et al. (1987) also illustrated the importance of feedback from the principal. The teachers revealed that their administrators' leadership was a significant factor in making school a positive experience for them. The respondents were generally empathetic toward their principals, but they wanted "to feel more support and hear more praise and appreciation for their efforts in the classroom from the building administrator" (p. 48). Teachers disclosed similar opinions in a study by Fauske and Ogawa (1985). Tauber (1992) also drew a connection between professional autonomy and teachers' feelings about their work. "For teachers, being perceived as the expert . . . creates job satisfaction and the motivation to live up to the positive expectations of others" (p. 101).

The growing recognition of the importance of working conditions to teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their jobs, and the resultant impact on teacher efficacy has led to dire predictions from some quarters. In a report issued by the Rand Corporation, Darling-Hammond (1984) illustrated the type of conditions teachers feel have a negative effect on their quality of work life:

> It is easy to summarize the factors that contribute to teacher dissatisfaction. Teachers feel that they lack support -- physical support in terms of adequate facilities and materials; support services such as clerical help for typing, duplicating, and paperwork chores; and administrative support that would provide a school environment in which their work is valued and supported rather than obstructed by interruptions and a proliferation of non-teaching tasks. They see their ability to teach hampered by large class sizes and non-teaching duties. And they feel that they are not treated as professionals. They have limited input to decisions that critically affect their work environment, and they see few opportunities for professional growth. (p. 11)

Similar motivational influences have been described by other researchers too. Mitchell and Willower (1992) stated that teachers in their study "valued autonomy and they wanted the administrators to support their decisions, or, as one of them put it, 'to provide backing'" (p. 9). Teachers identified a number of factors which influenced their feelings about their work and acted as significant motivators: "shared goals, popular leadership, a relatively cohesive work group, and a sense of being part of a worthy effort" (p. 14). A further research finding highlighted the importance of teachers and administrators being able to develop a "trusting and professional relationship" (p. 9).

After reviewing the organizational and educational reform literature, Louis and Smith (1990) identified seven criteria which contribute to an improved quality of work life for teachers:

1. Respect from relevant adults.
2. Participation in decision making.
3. Frequent and stimulating professional interaction.
4. A high sense of efficacy.
5. Use of skills and knowledge.
6. Resources to carry out the job.
7. Goal congruence.

Louis and Smith called these benchmarks "social-psychological perceptions of the work environment" (p. 35). The authors then outlined various strategies that the studied schools had successfully employed in order to meet the criteria. They suggested that a quality of work life approach to school reform improves teachers' work lives, and therefore leads to better teaching.

A later study (Louis, 1992) presented some important findings concerning the effects of principals' leadership on school culture, and reemphasized the points above. The teachers involved said that effective principals engaged in a number of activities that improved the quality of their work lives, which subsequently led to improved teaching. Effective principals initiated policies that empowered teachers to "invent solutions to problems" (p. 151) so that the administrator wasn't the sole problem solver. Effective principals were also proactive and sought out advice, and they were aware of what was happening in classrooms because they dropped-in frequently. The respondents said that good principals modelled risk-taking to encourage teachers to stretch professionally, and confronted poor instructional practices when necessary. Finally, Louis reported that

> teachers were clear that the principal set an important tone for developing a vision and a value orientation in the school. It is important for the principal to understand

> and reflect the best in community ethical standards and values, and to "make clear what is valued -- don't keep faculty guessing about what is important." (p. 152)

Kottkamp (1990) developed an extensive list of job satisfaction correlates by reviewing the literature of 1976-1989 that addressed teacher attitudes about work. The findings were derived from studies that searched "for various combinations of work, organizational, personality, and demographic characteristics related to job satisfaction" (p. 100). Characterizing them as "fragmented studies and isolated facts" (p. 107), he wrote that with so many different definitions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, it was not possible to develop an all-encompassing theory to explain the correlates. Kottkamp concluded by stating that "job satisfaction research has not led to an understanding of teacher commitment, performance, and productivity" (p. 107).

Despite the assertion made by Kottkamp, it seems, in light of the literature reviewed, that there is a link between teachers' feelings about their place of work and what they see occurring to promote exemplary teaching practices.

Perspectives on Leadership

Teachers' views on the principals' leadership have been explored in a number of recent studies. For example, Andrews, Soder, and Jacoby (1986) used a staff assessment questionnaire to gather teachers' opinions. One of the more significant and often-quoted findings of their research was that teachers' "perceptions of the principal as an instructional leader are critical to the reading and mathematics achievement of students, particularly among historically low-achieving groups of students" (p. 14).

Building on the research conducted in 1986, Smith and Andrews (1989) interviewed teachers in order to uncover their perceptions of what principals do as strong instructional leaders. The authors presented their findings using the four areas of "strategic interaction" that had provided the focus for the initial study, and which distinguished the principal as a successful instructional leader: (1) mobilizing resources, (2) acting as an instructional resource, (3) communicating, and (4) being a visible presence (p. 32). The findings in each of the areas have been reviewed below.

1. Teachers who described their principals as strong resource providers discussed how they promoted professional development activities for staff members. Principals found ways to muster the resource support needed to help achieve academic goals, and they devised creative ways to use available resources within the school.

2. Smith and Andrews reiterated that the key to improving the school was "to help teachers expand their use of instructional strategies" (p. 33). One way for this to occur was for the principal to act as an instructional resource. Teachers' comments illustrated that principals described as strong instructional leaders employed a variety of methods to encourage the use of different teaching strategies. In post-observation conferences, they served "as cheerleaders, encouragers, facilitators, counsellors, and coaches for expanding the teacher's repertoire of instructional strategies one step at a time" (p. 34).

3. The teachers in the Smith and Andrews study attached considerable importance to the principal being "seen as a good communicator at three different levels -- one-on-one, as a small group facilitator, and to create a sense of vision for the school" (p. 34). Strong instructional leaders encouraged experimentation in the classroom and always communicated

> a sense of professionalism to their staff members by clinically supervising them according to their performance as teachers. . . . Strong instructional leaders are able to spend less time on student matters because they work to improve the skills of all teachers, particularly low-performing teachers. Each is described by their teachers as tough, fair, and a "tyrant" for kids. They prefer to counsel teachers rather than evaluate teachers out of teaching. However, they articulate the view that they will use whichever method works. Teachers perceive that their principals expect a high level of performance from their teaching staff, and they model high performance standards in their own behaviour.
>
> "Providing a clear vision of what the school is all about" is more important to teachers than most of the other activities that describe instructional leaders. Teachers report that strong instructional leader principals start the school year with statements like, "I have spent my summer thinking about our school, reviewing our curriculum and instructional methods, reviewing our ideas about education, reviewing the performance of our students." Then they either say, "Here is where I think we should go this year, and we are going to spend the afternoon gaining consensus about what we are going to do, and each of us must commit ourselves to doing it," or they say, "Here is where I have decided we are going this year.

> Anyone who does not want to go there with us, we'll find someplace else for you to go!" The teachers in these schools believe their principals all yell "CHARGE!" but clearly they each yell Charge! in their own way, based on personal style and the way they work with the teachers in their own school. (pp. 35-36)

4. The final area of interaction examined in the study involved the principal presenting a strong, visible presence in the school. The authors related how teachers said that strong instructional leaders "are seen out and around" (p. 37) in all parts of the school at various times of the day. They frequently visit classrooms and are seen at assemblies and other similar functions. From their casual visits they give teachers positive feedback, verbally or in the form of a note. Finally, Smith and Andrews explained that strong instructional leaders are not only visible physically, but through their "deeply ingrained philosophy of education that permeates the school" (p. 38) as well. Everyone associated with the school knows what the principal stands for because it has been translated "into words and deeds so that it is visible for all to see" (p. 38).

Gomez and Jamgochian (1989) examined the types of administrator behaviours that teachers value, and reported findings indicating discrepancies between the views of the two groups. "Principals and teachers have different perceptions about the nature and amount of influence principals have on instructional activities in schools" (p. 43). Perhaps the most significant finding was that

> principals tended to perceive themselves as having more influence than was attributed to them by teachers. At the same time, the study did reveal that teachers see themselves being influenced by principals, but the areas in which they were being influenced and the nature and intensity of influence was generally not perceived similarly. (p. 42)

The authors further stated that "research on principals' influence has frequently failed . . . to identify behaviours or specific details of leadership describing what principals actually do to influence teachers and consequently increase student achievement scores" (p. 40).

In a recent article Hoversten (1992) outlined those administrative behaviours that she saw helping teachers to become more effective in the classroom. From a teacher's perspective she offered five suggestions for principals to improve on their leadership and to help teachers to realize their full potential. Her first suggestion was for principals to give positive feedback often. "Teachers like to know that their hard work and efforts to maintain high standards are appreciated; but far too often, positive feedback on a personal level is slow in coming from the principal" (p. 102). The second suggestion was for principals to maintain high standards through (a) hiring practices, (b) respecting teaching time, and (c) ensuring teacher accountability. Encouraging teachers' professional growth was the third suggestion Hoversten offered. "With teacher burnout a very serious reality, good principals will do all they can to maintain the well-being of their staff, and professional growth is one way to keep the 'fires of enthusiasm' burning brightly" (p. 104). She went on to say that teachers often become frustrated and angry if "their voices are never heard, [and] their opinions never respected" (p. 104). To overcome this problem and to enable principals to draw on the expertise of teachers, Hoversten recommended that principals share the decision making. Her final suggestion centred on involving the parents and the community in the educational process.

In a study to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions of principals' instructional management behaviours in "achieving" elementary schools, Pavan and Reid (1991) reported that teachers rated supervising and evaluating instruction the highest. In the principals' self-report, they gave the highest rating to developing and enforcing academic standards. Other than this difference, there was considerable similarity between the two groups' ratings of the principals' instructional management behaviours. The findings illustrated that the human resources frame was used most often by the principals in the study, and one principal used a combination of all four of the theoretical frameworks. Teachers reported that all the principals had high expectations for both staff and students.

In a symposium which examined the findings of a survey of supervisory practices, Goldsberry et al. (1984) determined that teachers' views of principals' supervisory behaviours can become a factor in school and teacher improvement efforts:

> When teachers perceive specific supervisory practices are in place, educational improvements can be made through instructional supervision. When supervision is

> devoid of these specific practices, it is more likely to be perceived as an important ritual: supportive, yes; helping teachers improve and change teaching, no. (p. 14)

Boyd (1989) studied teachers' perceptions of helpful instructional leadership by examining critical incidents and the role that administrators played during those times. Her findings highlighted the importance of principals' routine actions:

> The everyday acts of leaders significantly impacted the world of the teacher. It was desired that those in leadership positions be available and be willing to listen, display trust and confidence in teachers, be positive models, be authoritative enough to make decisions when they needed to be made, and provide feedback to teachers.
>
> Teachers observed their principals in numerous situations. The activities undertaken by principals and the behaviour of principals influenced teachers. The impressions left through such observations affected the confidence teachers had in principals.
>
> The participants in this study widely experienced trusting relationships with principals. Through being supportive of teachers' attempts, being willing to help, and through being non-judgemental, principals were able to develop and maintain trusting relationships with teachers. (pp. 89-90)

The conflict between being a disciplinarian and an educator in her assignment as an assistant principal was highlighted by McDaniel Dombart (1992). Drawing upon her personal experience, she referred to the type of administrative behaviour her teachers valued:

> We all know that the real measure of my success as an assistant principal depends upon what I do with the students they refer to the office. . . . The highest accolade I can receive in the teachers' lounge is that I've backed them up. The worst is that I'm a soft touch. (p. 85)

Cheng (1991) described a Hong Kong study that surveyed teachers to establish profiles of principals' leadership styles. A strong relationship was found between leadership style and organizational process. In follow-up interviews with teachers in a "high-performing" school, Cheng reported that

> teachers admitted that the principal was playing a salient role in their professional development and in shaping school climate. The principal had a definite philosophy of management and education. He was highly goal-oriented but had not neglected human relations. In developing a new school, the principal took the most important role to set goals for the school; to establish the pattern of organization and the methods of procedure; to set a hardworking example; to facilitate the formation of an open climate; and to guide the less experienced teachers. Both the principal and the staff believed strongly that they were working hard for the high ideals, and the

> current achievements were due to the successful leadership style and open organizational climate." (p. 34)

In a similar study in the United States, Valentine and Bowman (1991) surveyed teachers in "recognized" and "typical" schools in order to develop a description of the leadership skills of their respective principals. The findings illustrated that teachers in the schools "recognized" for their effectiveness perceived their principals

> as strongest in "providing direction for the school," "organizing tasks and personnel for the effective day-by-day management of the school," and "promoting positive working relationships between the school, the community the school serves, and other educators and agencies which work with the school." (p. 5)

Valentine and Bowman concluded by stating that "clearly, the teachers of the recognized schools perceive their principals as more effective than teachers of the randomly selected schools" (p. 7).

Pfeifer (1986) outlined the results of a study that painted "a picture of administrative leadership through the eyes of classroom teachers" (p. 4). He reported that

> teachers expect their principal to minimize uncertainty and promote a positive atmosphere in the environment around their classrooms without intruding and removing what little discretion they possess. From teachers' perspectives, leadership in schools becomes a task of *enablement*, a task of providing the conditions that allow competent teachers to flourish and to maximize their effectiveness. (p. 5)

Teachers' described specific administrative acts which helped to "insulate them from the uncertainties associated with teaching" (p. 5) that often had an influence on their effectiveness in the classroom. In addition, respondents also expressed a need for the principal to shape "an enabling 'affective' environment" (p. 7) in their schools. "Teachers spoke of such things as support, a sense of professional safety, pats on the back and other forms of recognition, camaraderie, and a family feeling. All of these experiences are important to teaching success from teachers' perspectives" (p. 7). Pfeifer concluded by stating that while the teachers' view might be overly simplistic, administrators need to adapt their behaviours and training to accommodate the many variables in their schools, including teachers' perceptions of their role.

Blase (1987a, 1987b) also examined teachers' perspectives on school leadership, and identified a number of task-related and consideration-related factors representative of effective and ineffective principals. The study demonstrated "that a number of highly interrelated elements -- principal behaviour, values, beliefs, attitudes, goals and skills -- are important to leadership" (1987b, p. 209), and that these factors have an impact on the social and cultural structures in schools. The findings also indicated that

> such factors as authoritarianism, harassment, inconsistency, and non-support directly interfered with teacher performance. Other factors such as lack of knowledge by the principal, lack of opportunities for teacher input, and poorly defined goals on the part of the principal indirectly affected teachers. (1987b, p. 210)

Blase (1987a) also suggested that principals' "people-related competencies" were perceived by teachers as "essential to effective school leadership" (p. 608).

Clearly the literature reviewed in this section illustrates the wide range of teachers' opinions on the principals' leadership. The research shows that teachers see many aspects of administrators' leadership styles influencing teaching practices. Perhaps it is this diversity of views itself which is significant.

Summary

Extracting from the professional literature those works which are relevant to a study of principals' actions is not as straightforward a task as it may at first appear. The body of educational research suggests that there are few areas which are not touched in some way by the activities of school-based administrators. The studies of effective principals reviewed in the first section of this chapter attest to the wide range of behaviours in which they engage in their day to day work. These different modes of behaviour create conditions which are supportive of students' learning, and are shaped by the principals' personal traits, their interpretation of their environment, and their orientation to the job of school administration. Several authors highlighted the significance of the principals' everyday activities, and it was pointed out that certain leadership styles may be considered "effective" under different circumstances. The literature served to reinforce the conception that the nature of principals' work is inherently difficult to fully comprehend.

The second section examined instructional leadership and the supervision of instruction. A review of the research uncovered many definitions of the terms, but there was general agreement that the ultimate goal of these activities was the improvement of instructional practices. As in the previous section, the fact that no one pattern of behaviour emerged in these areas served to add to the complexity of their meanings. However, the literature did reveal certain administrator tasks which were considered central to instructional improvement. They included, but were not restricted to, the following: (a) coordinating activities in the school, (b) providing a focus for others to work towards, (c) supervising and evaluating instruction, (d) encouraging teachers' professional development, (e) setting goals, (f) modelling behaviours, (g) maintaining a visible presence in the school, (h) providing support and recognition for teachers, and (i) establishing routines which served to create an enabling environment in which teachers could work. The need for principals to instil a sense of trust and confidence with and among staff members was a common theme in many works. Although the improvement of instruction should be the common goal of school administrators, there were many and varied instructional leadership behaviours proposed by the academics.

The research on teachers' views of administrators' actions was presented in the final section of the review. The literature highlighted the potential barriers created by *perception*, and drew attention to the misconceptions which can arise from opposing views of the same behaviour. Studies have identified a number of personal and professional qualities of administrators which teachers feel have a bearing on *how* principals carry out their duties. Similarly, the literature reveals an extensive list of administrator activities that teachers believe are important for ensuring that good teaching is occurring. Consequently, *what* principals do in their leadership role, and *how* they choose to do it, creates conditions which teachers view as being either supportive or non-supportive of their teaching activities. In conclusion, the literature on principals' work from teachers' perspectives shows a multitude of meanings associated with administrators' actions: actions which impact teaching activities directly, or indirectly by influencing teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their work.

In light of the literature reviewed in this chapter, and the points made above, it seems desirable to further explore what principals do to establish and sustain good teaching practices in their schools. The relative scarcity of studies that describe the meanings teachers associate with principals' actions (Blase, 1987a, 1987b; Leithwood et al., 1990), suggests that our knowledge of school administration would be enhanced by an examination of their views. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) discussed the advantages of studying teachers' stories to gain greater insight into the way they experience life at school. Hence an interpretive study would serve to deepen our understanding of the meanings teachers attach to principals' activities, further our awareness of school administration, and aid in filling a gap in the existing literature.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

The intention of this thesis was to acquire richer insights into the meanings that teachers hold for the actions of the principal. The research methods that were employed in exploring their views are outlined in this chapter, as are the steps that were taken to ensure compliance with the University's guidelines on ethics in human research. The ensuing pages also contain a detailed description of the procedures that were followed with respect to the selection of the participants, the collection and analysis of the data, and the measures that were taken to establish the study's trustworthiness.

Research Design

This study was based on the interpretive research paradigm using qualitative methodology. Rather than endeavouring to develop generalizations from the data, the objective was to seek greater knowledge and understanding of the problem as it related to the participants. The questions outlined in the first chapter served as a general guide for the research, but the specific design was allowed to evolve as the study progressed. This was in keeping with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) description of the emergent nature of research design in naturalistic inquiry, and permitted its adaptation to include variables that were unanticipated prior to the commencement of the research (Borg & Gall, 1989). Inductive analysis of the data as they were collected led to deeper insights as the teachers' meanings and values emerged.

Participant Selection

Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that by deliberately selecting a wide variety of people to study, the qualitative researcher "increases the scope or range of data exposed . . . as well as the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered" (p. 40).

To this end I elected to develop a purposive sample of respondents from diverse backgrounds and experiences for this research venture.

In order to broaden the spectrum of data uncovered, I decided that a primary selection criterion would be to interview only experienced teachers who had worked with more than one principal in their career. The eight participants selected for this study came from a number of centres across Alberta, and taught in schools ranging in size from "small rural" to "large urban." Two of the teachers currently appointed to urban schools indicated that they had worked in rural settings earlier in their careers. Representing assignments at all levels of elementary and secondary education, the participants' teaching experience spanned from 5 to 22 years. Each teacher had been assigned to anywhere from two to four different schools, and had taught with a number of administrators over the years. From a low of 2 to a high of 12, collectively they described their experiences with over 40 different principals -- all of them male.

In describing her own research, Measor (1985) stated that "the quality of the data [gathered] is dependent on the quality of the relationships you build with the people being interviewed" (p. 57). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that "respondents are much more likely to be both candid and forthcoming if they respect the inquirer and believe in his or her integrity" (p. 256). These comments laid the foundation for the second criterion I established for the selection of the participants. Namely, that they be known to me either personally or through contacts at the university. As I was acting as the "primary data-gathering instrument" (Borg & Gall, 1989), I wanted the teachers to feel comfortable during the interview process, and by fostering an environment conducive to an open dialogue, the trustworthiness of the data was improved.

A final minor criterion in selecting participants was the consideration given to gender. By choosing five females and three males, an approximately even mix was obtained.

Prospective respondents were tentatively identified while I awaited approval from the Department's Research Ethics Review Committee. After being granted the authority to proceed with the study, each teacher was contacted verbally, either in person or by telephone, and was given a brief explanation of the purpose of the research project and the role that they would be expected to play. At each stage of the data-collection they were informed that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Teachers were assured that their responses would be kept confidential, that potentially harmful data would not be included in the thesis without their permission, and that in order to protect their anonymity, pseudonyms would be used in the final document. Teachers were given the opportunity to seek further clarification prior to giving consent to participate in the investigation, and copies of the research proposal were made available for this purpose. All the teachers contacted were quite willing to be involved in the study, and several expressed an interest in seeing the final document once it was completed.

After receiving the teachers' verbal agreement, a letter providing more detailed information about the study was forwarded to each participant, along with a consent form and a written statement with respect to the ethical considerations described above (see Appendix A). The initial round of interviews were scheduled once the completed consent forms were returned.

Data Collection

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasized that one of the basic tenets of naturalistic research is that data are collected through the use of "human instruments." The data gathered for this thesis were obtained by engaging in semi-structured interviews with eight experienced teachers over a three month period. Each interview was of approximately one hour's duration, and was conducted either at the university or in a private residence. The participants' responses were tape-recorded in order to be assured of the completeness and accuracy of the data collected. In addition, during each interview I made note of any questions or topics that seemed to present the respondents with difficulty, and I noted certain non-verbal cues that helped to deepen my understanding of their spoken words when reviewing the tapes and transcripts thereafter.

Although the questions detailed in the first chapter were used to guide the interview, participants were allowed to relate their stories freely in order to obtain more dependable qualitative data. Using the kind of techniques suggested by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), I learned to speak as little as possible and to only make timely interjections when I felt that further clarification or probing was needed. In keeping with the emergent design of this study, the data-gathering process led to insights that suggested refinements in the questioning in succeeding interviews.

The two initial interviews allowed me to test the interview guide questions, and to polish my interviewing techniques. The feedback obtained from the interviewees drew my attention to some areas of concern with respect to the wording and order of the questions, and by reflecting on my own performance I was able to make changes in subsequent interviews that allowed the dialogue to proceed more smoothly. I discovered that I needed to make point-form notes as the interviews progressed to enable me to formulate new questions, and to keep track of ideas expressed during the course of our conversations. I was then able to return to statements requiring elaboration without disrupting the free-flow of ideas. I also learned of the limitations of the tape recorder I was using, which made me more cognizant of seating arrangements when interviewing in other peoples' homes.

As described earlier, each interview was tape-recorded and then transcribed (see Appendix B). While examining the transcripts as part of the on-going data-analysis, I often discovered points requiring further clarification, or issues that gave rise to additional questions. These queries were penciled in the margins for the respondents to address. The transcripts were then returned to each participant in order to verify the content, to answer the supplemental questions, and to give them the opportunity to make any additions or deletions as they saw fit. On four occasions teachers requested that we meet again because they wished to make additional points that had come to mind after the initial interview. I then embarked on a round of follow-up interviews which were transcribed and verified in the manner described above. Once all the verified transcripts were returned, the final data analysis began.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data for this thesis began during the collection phase "in order to facilitate the emergent design" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 242). The data generated by each participant gave rise to additional areas for probing in ensuing interviews. By studying the growing body of data inductively, I sought to uncover the "multiple realities" contained therein, and I hoped to gain greater insight into the research problem.

In order to get "back into the situation" and stay "close to the data," I transcribed each tape-recorded interview myself. I then subjected the interview tapes and transcripts to numerous re-readings and re-listenings, and as my grasp of the teachers' meanings strengthened, I was gradually able to put category labels in the margins of the master transcripts.

The transcripts were printed with numbered lines and were photocopied on different colours of paper so that individual passages could be easily cross-referenced by both interview and line number. Each transcript was cut-up and then sorted according to the margin labels. After numerous sortings and re-sortings of the data within the categories, the categories themselves were put in order. Distinct patterns began to materialize that became the organizational framework for the presentation of the findings. Once the categories were organized, the original transcripts were then re-examined with a view to identifying the themes arising from the data. Throughout this process I maintained a reflective journal in which I recorded my evolving ideas and insights (see Appendix C).

As the categories and themes emerged, they were shared with the respondents to obtain their reactions (see Appendix D). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explained that the purpose of such an action is threefold: [to] "(1) verify that you have reflected the insider's perspectives; (2) inform you of sections that, if published, could be problematic for either personal or political reasons; and (3) help you to develop new ideas and interpretations" (p. 147). The teachers were likewise invited to provide feedback on the analysis of the data with which they had also been presented.

Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and McCormack Steinmetz (1991) asserted that:

> To analyze is to find some way or ways to tease out what we consider to be essential meaning in the raw data; to reduce and reorganize and combine so that the readers share the researcher's findings in the most economical, interesting fashion. The product of analysis is a creation that speaks to the heart of what was learned. (p. 140)

Because this was an interpretive study, I sought to present the findings in a manner that would preserve the richness and diversity of the experiences that teachers related. By using "thick description" I hoped to convey to the reader a greater sense of the meanings and values that the eight teachers in this study hold for the actions of the principal. Their stories are contained in the next chapter.

Trustworthiness

While conducting this research, a number of procedures were followed in order to affirm the trustworthiness of the study. To ensure that the findings presented were "honest and believable" (Ely et al., 1991, p. 95), particular emphasis was given to the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

After the interviews were transcribed they were forwarded to the participants for verification of the content. At that time the teachers were able to make any changes they deemed necessary to provide an accurate representation of their views, thus making certain that the data used in the study were dependable.

The categories and themes were shared with the participants and other teachers in order to verify their credibility, and an audit of the data analysis was conducted by the thesis advisor to obtain an independent check on credibility. In addition, the analysis of the interview data (see Appendix D) was shared with the respondents to solicit their feedback and to provide a further check on the credibility and dependability of the information.

To enhance the transferability of the study's findings, efforts were made to ground the teachers' stories using the methods outlined earlier, and follow-up interviews were conducted in order to deepen the data. By engaging in purposive sampling, and using "thick description" to present the findings, readers have been provided with the data base necessary to enable them to make their own transferability judgements.

As a measure to establish confirmability, an audit trail consisting of interview tapes, transcripts, and journal notes was maintained throughout the study. In addition, all data were referenced in a manner that made it possible to trace each item back to its point of origin.

Summary

The design of this research study and the methods used in implementing it were described in this chapter. As an interpretive study it employed an emergent design, and purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, and were analyzed on an on-going basis. Throughout the process, special consideration was given to promoting the trustworthiness of the study. The findings have been presented using "thick description" in order to preserve the meanings and values as they were originally voiced by the respondents.

The product of the data-analysis -- the reconstruction of the stories that teachers shared -- can be found in the pages that follow.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The interviews with the eight teachers in this study generated a wealth of raw data for analysis. The participants willingly shared their experiences and opinions having collectively worked with over 40 principals during their careers. This chapter is a description of the interview data and illustrates my understanding of the tremendous diversity of the views that the teachers held.

The data are presented according to the categories that emerged during a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts. As the stories the teachers related were diverse and intricately interwoven, it is not my intent to answer the interview guide questions directly. Rather, the data are examined in the general pattern of the teachers' responses during our conversations, in a manner that helps illustrate the richness and depth of their experiences.

The analysis of the teachers' stories yielded five major categories into which they could be grouped. Respondents described those actions of the principal which were designed to establish a focus for the school and its teachers. These I have termed "The Principal and Vision." The second category, "The Principal and Teaching," refers to those administrator behaviours more closely connected with teachers and the teaching act itself. "The Principal as Educator" is the category in which respondents expressed their views on administrators and their personal involvement with teaching, and described how this influenced what happened in their own classrooms. Factors which helped shape the overall climate of the school are presented in the fourth category "The Principal and Climate." The final category contains teachers' descriptions of principals as individuals. It also addresses the impact that the principals' orientations to administration have on teaching practices from teachers' perspectives.

Although the data have been sorted according to the categories described above, it should be noted that there is considerable overlap amongst them. Those actions of the principal in one category may simultaneously relate to one or more other categories. In those instances where this has occurred, major connections have been identified.

Research into leader behaviour has been exhaustive, but only two dimensions of leadership have been repeatedly identified in the professional literature (Owens, 1991). The first dimension is concerned with achieving specific group objectives, and the second is geared toward strengthening or maintaining the group itself. Broadly speaking, the teachers' responses in this study seemed to follow the same general pattern as well. Thus the categories have been arranged using the theoretical framework described above.

The pages that follow contain the presentation of the findings from the interview data. The stories have been told from the teachers' points of view, and in order to remain faithful to the original transcripts, italics have been used to show the emphasis respondents gave to particular words or phrases. The reference citations specify the line numbers of the interview from which the quotes were extracted, and to assist the reader, the pseudonyms Brad, Craig, Elizabeth, Helen, Lisa, Louise, Lynn, and Mark have been used throughout the document.

The Principal and Vision

In order for good teaching to occur, many teachers felt that the principal needed to provide direction with respect to goals and operational parameters in the school. For them it was important for the principal to get the school "on-track" and to do what was necessary to keep it functioning that way. Participants discussed a variety of different ways in which this had occurred in their experience, their comments illustrating numerous different conceptions of what school is and should be.

The Visionary Principal

The significance of the principal having a vision for the school was expressed by several teachers. For Brad, it was the most important thing, and he referred to it at the very start of his interview:

> I've worked with six different principals, and probably the ones that I would consider the most effective . . . are the ones who had a really clear idea of where they wanted the schools to go -- or what they wanted out of their schools -- and they communicated that to their staff. . . . They knew what they wanted out of their business and they communicated that to you. They said, "You're part of this business and we need your support and your help to make it work." The most effective principal I've had did that very well. [4,20-31]

Another of Brad's principals used a similar approach, and he commented on the effect that it had on him as a teacher:

> Whenever I started with him, there was a goal in mind, and he made you a part of that goal. He made you feel that you could contribute positively to it. Therefore you were working really hard towards it, because what you were doing was just a part of the success of the whole. [4,297-300]

When that influence was removed at a later date, Brad spoke about how teaching practices declined in quality "because there was no one trying to pull all these people together and say, 'This is what we're working for. Remember, this is our goal'" [4,304-306]. This became a source of real frustration for Brad, so much so that under his current administration he feels he has lost respect for the principal because, in his view, the principal doesn't have a clear vision for the school. "If he doesn't know what he wants, how can he tell me what to do? I know what *I* want from my department, but unless *he* knows what he wants from my department, how can he evaluate that?" In describing a different situation he said:

> I find that because he doesn't seem to have a clear picture of what he wants for a school, [of] all the parts contributing to this really good place, I find that everybody's taking care of themselves, and kind of ignoring what's going on around [them].... You do your own thing, you take care of yourself, and as long as things work smoothly for you, the other people can just struggle and muddle through, which doesn't lead to good staff cohesion and things like that. [4,113-122]

He characterized the situation as being a difficult one in which to work:

> It's really tough because it should be everybody working together, but because of the way that we've been given no direction, no clear direction of what we want our school to end up being -- this is what the goal is at the end -- it's just not working.

> It's too bad because we have the potential to be really good I'd say. . . . It's just not going to happen right now I don't think. [4,125-131]

Lynn also discussed the importance of goals, and talked about how a change in administration left staff members unsure of the direction the school was taking.

> [Under the first principal] we knew the goals of the school. We knew what our jobs were, we knew what we were supposed to do. Whereas when this next principal came we weren't sure what the goals were, for our own personal goals in our classroom plus the total school goal. [6,324-328]

The uncertainty created by this situation left teachers somewhat confused and led to them striking out on their own and fending for themselves. For Lynn it was important to be informed about what the principals' goals were and to know "where they were coming from" so that she and other staff members knew what to expect when problems arose. In Lynn's case, different principals let teachers know their goals in different ways. One "came right out and stated" [6,337-338] them, whereas another was more "subtle" in his approach. In either case the importance she attached to these actions was evident.

The need for a sense of direction and having something to work toward as a team was also addressed by other teachers. Respondents often indicated the importance of something by describing a time when the condition was absent. For example, Lisa spoke of a principal with whom she had worked who had given her "no direction" when she was new to a school. She received "very little information as to how the school ran" [7,55-56]. The direction she sought came from other staff members instead.

Brad explained that as a department head in one school, he wasn't given any specific responsibilities in that role. "It was just, the people in [the department] meet, decide what you want a department head to do, and go do it" [4,90-92]. He went on to say that for the most part he and the other teachers were left to their own devices without specific direction from the principal. "It's very much, as long as there's no problems, as long as a parent doesn't phone and say, 'What's going on in that . . . department?' we've got to be doing a good job" [4,92-94].

Defining the Boundaries

In the same way that respondents talked about needing to know what goals they were striving towards, some teachers stressed the importance of knowing what the functional boundaries or guidelines were going to be in their schools.

In Lynn's case, she related the confusion that arose in one of her schools after there was a change in administration and "no one knew the boundaries or the rules" [6,242-243]. The resulting lack of continuity in dealing with such things as student offences led to serious problems later on.

Similarly, Mark spoke at length on this topic, expressing a need to know what the "base point" was for a principal. He contended that teachers would then have a reference point from which to "gauge their own actions and reactions" [2,252-253], which in turn would create an air of predictability and stability within the school. Reasoning that "there is a layer of consistency that has to be in place, or teachers won't know what to do" [2,310], he went on to say:

> I don't care what the rules are, I can play by them as long as everybody plays by the rules. Just tell me what they are. They don't have to be a set of things that are written down on page 9 of the staff manual. I don't mean rules in that way, but what are the operational parameters? [2,428-432]

Mark found that those principals who had clear-cut rules and guidelines were often easier to work with than others. Describing one administrator as a "little fascist," but nevertheless a "good principal," he explained that

> he understood one way of doing things -- the right way. Kids didn't screw up, the teachers didn't screw up, because that wasn't right. You did what you're supposed to do and you could do as much beyond that as you wanted until you screwed up and then, bang!, you were in trouble. Everybody knew that, and we all worked for him. He was a very good principal. [2,410-417]

A second principal he characterized as

> a very "rules" man. A stack of rules on this side of his desk and a stack of procedures on this side. If you asked him a question that couldn't be dealt with [by] looking in those two dossiers, the question ceased to exist. It was no longer a valid question, because here were the rules. . . . [He] was a very easy man to work for, because you knew that he was rules. If there were no rules, there was no

> discussion. He taught me the expression that, "If you're not prepared to take 'no' for an answer, don't ask the question." Simple. [2,112-116,254-257]

Mark's later comments, however, suggested that although this principal had been easy to work with, his style of leadership hadn't necessarily encouraged good teaching practices. He explained that the need to follow formal procedures "destroyed a lot of enthusiasm on staff" [2,124], and as a consequence many of the traditional extra-curricular activities that teachers had run for students came to a halt.

Louise related a similar experience that she had with a principal whom she described as "a terrific administrator," but one who did everything "by the book" [3,705]. Unlike Mark, who felt that the "rules" principals were easier to work for, Louise found such an approach too restrictive for her teaching style. Her comments present an interesting counterpoint to Mark's point of view:

> [He] was just a by-the-book sort of guy, so much so that he didn't see the forest for the trees. At the end of June I thought well maybe I could hang in there, but I knew by that time that I couldn't count on him. If it wasn't in the policy book, and if he couldn't relate to it, he couldn't be flexible. Everything else about him was superlative. He was incredible, but . . . he had to be complying with policy. He was most inflexible. [3,852-860]

Louise determined that she was unable to continue working in such an environment and eventually decided to move on.

The interview data from other participants further suggest a somewhat "grey area" as to what constitutes too few or too many guidelines. The opposing views expressed by those teachers who discussed principals establishing boundaries help demonstrate that although the topic was considered important enough to be brought up, the teachers' motives for broaching the subject were clearly different. Although not mentioned by all respondents, it was apparent that defining the boundaries was an important issue for some.

Team Building

The importance of team work and teachers working together on a staff was clearly evident from the interview data. All teachers addressed the issue in some way, but the means by which team work came about seemed to vary greatly. In some cases the principal played a significant role, as evidenced by Lisa's statement: "He *never ever* made us feel like we weren't part of the team" [7,196-197]. Similarly, Brad compared how his different principals handled the issue of working together as a team:

> The effective ones made you feel that you were contributing positively, that what you were doing was important. The ineffective ones -- you knew you were contributing, but you didn't know if it was good or bad. You were just doing your job. It was a part of the school, but it was kind of separate too. You could have been a whole unto yourself. Whereas the effective ones you were a part of this whole thing, and you just contributed to the atmosphere of the life of the school. [4,564-571]

For Mark, one of the things that went into the development of a strong staff team was the hiring process. In describing his experiences overseas, Mark characterized his colleagues as "the best three staffs that I've worked with" [2,138-139]. This he attributed largely to the "exhaustive" selection process which left only "the very best" candidates for hiring [2,140-151]. He went on to describe this experience as one "in which the principal was very distant from the classroom" [2,168-169]. The principals "understood that they had a team of teachers who were just dynamite." They relied on the teaching core and "didn't mess around with trivial stuff. They knew they had really good people. Very few people there were anything other than department heads" [2,189-192].

Lisa also addressed the concept of team-building when she described how one of her principals had hired new teachers. In contrast with Mark's story, she highlighted a major drawback with choosing the best available teachers for a staff. Likening them to "thoroughbreds," she described how the strong teachers had a tendency to "run until they were worn out," with the result being that they tired early from their efforts. "By November we were bagged" [7,193-195].

Transition periods during which schools undergo change can be difficult times for students and staff. Louise acknowledged this point when describing how her school was coping with just such an occurrence. In her view, it was the staff as a whole that was largely responsible for holding things together. She felt that since it was the principal who had brought the people together in the first place, he had to be given at least some of the credit for things working out the way they did. Characterizing the situation as "incredible," Louise explained, "It should be just a fiasco, but it isn't. . . . He has a really good staff, and he's hired them. He's hired all of them" [3,1137-1138]. The principal's influence in this case was seen as being indirect, yet clearly significant.

Elizabeth also dealt with the notion of staffs pulling together under different circumstances. Disclosing how she had been assigned to an inner-city school at one point in her career, Elizabeth described some of the difficulties associated with such a placement, and referred to her experiences there as "really unique." She attributed her choice of description not to any specific action of the principal, but to the "real sense of teamwork and camaraderie" [1,278-279] that existed among the staff in the school.

Elizabeth's disappointment at not finding the same kind of "spirit" in the next school to which she was assigned was clear. "I thought, 'Oh, well, I guess because high schools are so big, this kind of spirit doesn't exist'" [1,282-283]. Upon eventually transferring to yet another high school, however, Elizabeth quickly dismissed her theory. "But then when I got to [school X] it was there. People cared, people worked really hard" [1,283-284]. She went on to explain how special programming in the school promoted the concept of students and staff working closely together in a variety of ways. "It really made for a community spirit," she said [1,290-291]. In school X, the principal also taught classes, which helped to make him an "equal" in Elizabeth's eyes, thus closing the gap between the teachers and the administrator:

> I think that really contributed to the climate of the school. To just that feeling that we're all in this together. That it's not us and them. That students, staff, parents, members of the community -- everybody -- we're all working together for the same thing. I really feel like our school was a community, it wasn't a hierarchy. [1,251-256]

Elizabeth further emphasized the importance of her sense of community and the principal's positioning within the school later in the interview when she commented: "You know, when I think of my first three schools, I think of *the principal*, but when I think of [school X], I think of *the staff*, and us all together. . . . I think that's a real shift" [1,455-461].

As Mark reminisced about his early years of teaching, he too touched on the ideas of collegiality expressed by Elizabeth. He recounted two particular instances in his experience where staff members had worked well together, and in both cases he described the principal as being somewhat removed from the scene. The first he characterized as his "best year of teaching" in one particular district. It was his first year of teaching, and with the principal away on long-term leave, he worked with two different acting principals that year. As Mark explained what it was that had made the year so memorable, he drew attention to his conception of what schools ought to be, and shed light on his views of the teacher-principal relationship:

> There was nobody in charge who tried to tell anybody what to do. The staff worked as a collegial unit, and I am still in awe of that group of teachers. We all understood that there was no other responsibility out there really, other than ourselves, because on the books [X] was still our principal, at least for that year, and these other people were just doing the job of pushing the paper and lining the kids up -- that sort of thing. We worked as a cohesive team. . . . I mean we had somebody sitting in the chair, but they were colleagues rather than the enemy. [2,62-73]

One of the acting principals, whose curricular strength lay in an area different from Mark's, chose to leave him to teach his classes as he wished. Mark appreciated being left alone to conduct his classes free of encumbrances: "He didn't meddle. He didn't interfere at all" [2,75-76].

The second scenario related to Mark's overseas experience where "the principal was very distant from the classroom." Describing it as "a very collegially-oriented school," Mark recalled that the situation "brought out the best in teachers because people were not trying to please anyone but themselves and they shared materials" [2,166-168]. For Mark, good teaching was tied more with teachers' ability to use their professional judgement and to make their own decisions without undue interference from the principal's office.

When asked about what principals did to ensure good teaching practices, Elizabeth chose to focus on good schools as those with a strong sense of community. Mark described situations where the principal stayed out of the way, and let the strength of the teaching team be a guiding factor. Brad's comments on this matter, however, stand in stark contrast, indicating a very different view. For him, effective principals played a more prominent role than that described earlier by Elizabeth and Mark:

> The principal *is* a boss, and I think the *effective* principals knew that. And while they may not have ever have come out and said, "I'm the boss and you have to watch out for me," you knew that they would make decisions sometimes that were hard, that you may not have agreed with, but they would stick by them. Whereas the principals who were *not* effective came in with the idea "We're all equal." Like, "I'm at the top here, but we're all equal,. We're all friends. We're all at the same level Let's discuss things and come upon a consensus and things will be wonderful. We'll all take the heat when there's heat." And it doesn't work that way. Just by human nature whenever you have somebody who's in charge trying to be your friend, sometimes they end up being taken advantage of. The good principals you didn't take advantage of because you knew that they were boss, and *they* knew that they were boss. They *accepted* that responsibility, that sometimes even though socially you might be friends, they have to come to you and say, "Listen, I know you're a [subject X] person, but this year you have to teach [subject Y]." That's reality, you know. Whereas the other principals wouldn't have been able to do that. They would have given you preps and made somebody else be over-loaded or something. [4,1017-1037]

These last comments underscore the issues of fairness and equitability in the principals' dealings with staff members. Also addressed by other participants, these two concepts were woven throughout the interview data of several teachers, and although they are dealt with in other sections of this chapter, they seemed to have significance in terms of the principals' team-building accomplishments within the school.

In some cases the principals' success at getting teachers to work together was alluded to indirectly when teachers spoke on other issues. Louise related how in her school district teachers at various grade levels are entitled to proportional amounts of preparation time. She explained how one of her principals had "always tried to make things fair with preps" by making the distribution among teachers relatively uniform. As a result she said that "everybody was happy. I think a couple got more but maybe they were doing more coaching. It was nice. You felt, 'Hey, I matter. I count'" [3,689-698]. But at those times in her experience when preparation periods weren't apportioned evenly, it became a source of real irritation for her:

> Yes, we lowly elementary teachers are *only* supposed to get two preps, . . . and I'm sure there are very good reasons why high school teachers get the most and then junior high and then elementary. I'm sure there *must* be good reasons, but its pretty hard to convince teachers that there are good reasons when somebody gets twice as many prep periods as you do. [3,689-695]

In a similar vein, Brad addressed the issue of preparation time and teaching assignments and spoke of the potential effect that their allotment can have on staff unity. "I think that principals have a lot to do with that, how [staff members] perceive each other. If they perceive somebody as having the 'easy' route, then there starts to be a problem" [4,613-616]. He went on to express the opinion that competition between teachers was undesirable and then he described how some of his principals had attempted to alleviate the problem:

> I don't know if there's any one thing that they've *done*, but the *least* effective principals have often alluded to "the high school teachers" and "the junior high school teachers." . . . The effective principals haven't made a distinction, and I guess that would be the difference. . . . [Effective principals didn't say] "You have the better assignment because you got two high school classes and only one junior high." There was never a differentiation made, it was just: "We're all teachers, this is your assignment this year." . . . So I guess that it'd be more what they *didn't* do. [4,1082-1097]

In addition to taking steps to reduce competition among staff members, Brad identified the principals' ability to give clear direction as another means of enhancing staff unity. When such direction was not forthcoming from the principal, his experience was that teachers tended to "take care of themselves" and that they coped by ignoring what was happening about them.

> You do your own thing, you take care of yourself, and as long as things work smoothly for you, the other people can just struggle and muddle through, which doesn't lead to good staff cohesion and things like that. Right now we've got a real split between the people who are mostly junior high and the people who are mostly senior high teachers, for example, and that's hard. It's really tough because it should be everybody working together, but because of the way that we've been given no direction, no clear direction of what we want our school to end up being -- this is what the goal is at the end -- it's just not working. [4,119-128]

The importance of bringing teachers together and building a strong team was highlighted by other respondents as well. Sometimes this occurred as a result of overt actions by administrators, and in other cases, such as in Lynn's, it was due more to circumstance than the principal. Lynn's first teaching experience was in a small rural school. Staff turnover was very low, and school routines had been well-established over time. She felt that each of these things had made it easier for her to adapt to her new place of work "because the school kind of ran itself" [6,34-35]. She merely had to fit-in with the system that had evolved over time.

Lisa related how one of her principals had been concerned that teachers of a certain program in the school felt "disenfranchised," and she explained how he had taken steps to give them a higher profile both within the school and on a wider scale. "He's working really hard to integrate that program. He's very conscious of that, he doesn't leave people out" [7,365-367]. This was not an isolated case, as she also described how he had ensured that the Special Education program was integrated with the rest of the school's offerings. "We have a Special Ed. program and he's very conscious that in whatever we do, he wants that included" [7,367-368].

Craig also described how one of his principals got the teachers to work more closely with one another. "The staff members *didn't* interact a lot and there was really two schools going on at the same time" [8,454-456]. The administrator encouraged activities such as team-teaching and working together on special projects that crossed subject and language barriers as a means of bridging the gap between the groups:

> There's things like the school-wide operettas that we have . . . and *everybody* from K to 6 is involved in that. That's a real team effort bringing those kinds of things in, and it wasn't as if it was thrust upon you either. It's a staff decision, but it's certainly *encouraged* by the administration. Some of that as well is shepherding into activities that will make you feel like you have a part in it as well really. [8,155-161]

Helen conveyed a story about one of her principal's undertakings to draw the staff together as a group. She said that on special occasions he would pay particular attention to the surroundings and establishing the mood for the event:

> He puts a great deal of effort into the ambiance. On our PD day we moved out into the atrium. There were decorations of balloons and candies on the table, caramel popcorn in our school colours. . . . We all sat in a big circle so we could "bond." The popcorn was caramel-coloured, and red, white and blue. The punch was red. Big on the school colours. He wears school colours often. He really encourages *us* to wear school colours. The banners that are being painted for the school are in the school colours. [5,669-678]

Sometimes principals cultivated a sense of teamwork by actively involving teachers in the planning process. One of Helen's principals brought in consultants to help the staff formulate a plan of action for an anticipated major programming change in the school. The task was accomplished through "a series of after-school workshops" [5,42] in which the school's staff worked side by side with the incoming teachers to prepare a blueprint for the upcoming year. "The principal has been active in recruiting people to assist us. Also chairing the sessions, participating fully in the group work, and just trying to tie it together and make it meaningful and practical for next year" [5,52-55]. By drawing the current and incoming teachers together in this manner to lay the groundwork for the ensuing school term, the principal worked to foster a sense of involvement among all staff members at an early stage.

The preceding stories help illustrate the teachers' desire for school staff members to work together. Some respondents highlighted the team-building efforts of the principal as being significant in their view. Whereas for others, simply being left alone so that the teaching team could do its job relatively undisturbed was of paramount importance. In each case though, the concept of teamwork, however derived, was considered central to the notion of establishing a firm base for good teaching, and proved to be a significant component of this category.

The Principal and Teaching

The main thrust of this thesis was to investigate teachers' views on what principals do to ensure good teaching practices. It seems only natural then that of the interview data gathered, a significant portion of it would address principals' actions with respect to the teaching act itself. The volume of data uncovered in this area led to the creation of a sizeable category which I have named "The Principal and Teaching."

Within the sub-categories are the respondents' stories about principals with high expectations; their views of the impact on teaching practices of the principals' curricular knowledge and their maintaining a high degree of visibility; discussions pertaining to the monitoring and evaluating of teaching; and finally, their comments with respect to issues of staff development.

High Expectations

Teachers spoke often about principals and their expectations of the staff. They tended to focus on one individual whose actions stood out in their mind, and they described both the positive and negative effects of the administrator's approach. In some cases principals had clearly made their expectations known to staff, and actively worked to reinforce them through various means. In other instances the principals' style was more subtle and understated, and the message filtered through to teachers indirectly.

Louise related stories of her experiences that stood out from the other teachers' responses in terms of their vivid description and rich detail. The passion and animation with which she recounted the series of episodes was testimony to the obvious lasting impact that one particular principal had on her.

The principal worked hard to bring out the best in the teachers and he continually strove to ensure the students' education was "meaningful." Louise explained that as principal he "tried to be involved in everything," and that he often encouraged teachers to attempt new strategies:

> He taught me as much about teaching -- just by forcing me to do better, do more, and keep up with the times -- as I've learned in 10 years of teaching. [3,271-274]
>
> [He] wanted everything to be "on the table", and for everyone to know about it and to discuss it, and perhaps to be more and more and more professional, and more effective. That was his aim. [3,326-329]
>
> He would be interested in new ideas -- in reading, for example. He wanted us to know about it and to try it, and it would be good but it would be just one more thing you'd have to do, and sometimes he wouldn't quite understand why we weren't as enthused with this radical new idea as he was. [3,496-501]
>
> I found that what he wanted would filter down, definitely, because he seemed always to be there. Your report cards were a reflection of you, but also of him. I *still* do my report cards bearing in mind the comments that he made to me. "*Why* is that kid getting 39? Don't just give them a 39, what are *you* doing about it? You as a teacher, what are you doing about it? What has that child learned? Write it down. Those parents have got to know." [3,503-510]

Although Louise spoke highly of this principal throughout the interview, his high expectations had a tendency to strain teachers and sometimes led her to resent him. Characterizing the pressure as "incredible, at times" [3,374-375], she related:

> He tried his *damnedest* to make us more professional, more effective, and sometimes I wonder if it wasn't too much. But I think you would, if you continued to teach with [him], well you would either have to be able to handle that sort of growth -- and it is stressful to be pushed like that -- you would either go with his way or you would have a really miserable time teaching with him I think.
>
> He'd have pep-talks and rallies to pep us up. Some of us would think, "Oh my god I can't do any more! He wants more?! *More?!* More detailed plans?!" . . . Everything he wanted though, was for a better education for those kids. Maybe sometimes he was misguided -- I'm sure he was, he's human -- but what would happen is some of us would take it to heart and others would just [shrug it off] and not do a darned thing. So we'd go back to our rooms, like whipped dogs, where what he was trying to do was get everyone in a frenzy, and just *race* out there and be more effective teachers. [3,332-343]

Other teachers also made frequent reference to their principals' expectations. Most, such as Mark, spoke about them favourably: "The only people who didn't like [his] operational procedures were the slackers because he expected them to do what they were supposed to do" [2,435-437]. And Brad:

> If you weren't pulling your weight or if he didn't like something in your classroom he came and told you. Not threatening, not with a big stick, but it was his job to evaluate his teachers, and if he saw a problem he did that. Whereas some of the other principals I've worked with, it was always sunshine and roses, you never heard any constructive criticism. He was very good. [4,211-216]

In other cases, teachers received indirect messages by observing what was going on around them. Choosing somewhat nebulous terms to describe the climate of expectation that her principal had set, Lisa explained that "there's always a sense that he would come out and check your lesson plans" [7,210-212]. She also stated that he required teachers to submit plan books and final exams at the end of each term, actions which she felt indirectly sent a message to the rest of the staff concerning his expectations.

> Teachers who have either not been following the curriculum, or have allowed behaviour problems or have allowed for unprofessional practices in their classroom have not stayed in our school. That is one message that is very clear. There is a *high* expectation in terms of your knowledge of the content, in terms of your methodology, in your organization, and in results. Very much: "Are the kids getting what they need?" [7,584-590]

The fact that on "more than three occasions" teachers had "either not had their contracts renewed" or had been "removed" from the school served to reinforce her views [7,590-593], yet she felt it necessary to qualify her remarks. Characterizing the working climate as "very professional and very constructive" [7,628], Lisa explained that although the principal had high expectations, she did not feel threatened:

> There's no doubt in my mind that when he wants to see things he does. But he's very clear that he would never put you under the gun. He would give you time to plan, he would give you the "I'm not coming in today." There would be no surprise visits [for the purpose of evaluation]. [7,621-625]

Brad also addressed the issue of course outlines, and used it as a catalyst for discussing ways of encouraging teacher growth. He drew some comparisons between his various principals in terms of their expectations, and he explained how some of them allowed teachers to use the same course outline for many years. In his opinion this practice didn't encourage teachers to perform a self-evaluation as a means of improving their teaching. Brad spoke more favourably of those principals who required teachers to make changes and revisions to their course outlines at the beginning of each semester. He thought the action "made" teachers take a closer look at what they were doing in the classroom, and he expressed the view that, "You have to keep evaluating as a teacher. It's the only way for you to improve, and it was just a little thing, but it made you look at what you were doing. So that was good" [4,846-848].

Helen expressed mixed feelings when discussing her current principal's expectations during her interview. On the one hand she spoke favourably about how he tried to give teachers some form of compensation for the extra personal time they were expected to devote to developing their programs.

By way of contrast, she was feeling somewhat uncomfortable at the prospect of a new teaching assignment which involved a program she had never taught before. The principal informed her it was going to be "very high-profile" and that his daughter was going to be in it. "He expects pretty high things. His expectations and the fact that he has made me aware of them certainly does influence the energy that I am going to be putting into these things. It almost makes me a little nervous" [5,746-749].

The importance of the principal's stated expectations being backed-up by appropriate administrative support was highlighted by Helen's later remarks. She experienced intense frustration with the fact that funds had not been provided to carry out the administrative directives to build the "best" program possible. At the time of the interview she was planning on confronting the principal with the problem. "I'm going to tell him that if he wants a Cadillac program, don't give me money for a Topaz" [5,861-862].

Three teachers addressed the fact that without the presence of an administrator with high expectations they had a tendency to "slide" or to develop a more complacent attitude toward their jobs. Brad expressed his opinion on the matter by describing a situation in which the principal did not appear to have high expectations of the staff:

> It seems like he doesn't demand that you become a high profile, or try and make your department high profile, really successful, some place that kids really want to be. He doesn't give you the sense that that's important. As long as you keep out

> of trouble, then that's good enough. Therefore I find that as a teacher you can kind of close your door and make sure things run smoothly there, and that's fine. No one will ever come in and question, so it would be really easy to slide into a "comfort zone." I'll let the kids do mostly what they want and as long as no one gets hurt or injured then we're fine. Which I don't really think leads to a hard-working staff. . . . You take care of yourself, but you don't look at the whole picture, the big picture. [4,99-111]

In addition to Brad's comments above, Craig described how it was suggested to him that he take an inservice on using collaborative approaches in the classroom. "If I hadn't been encouraged to take that and there hadn't been that sort of leadership present, maybe I wouldn't have taken it -- sort of a lackadaisical attitude" [8,213-216]. Similarly, Louise said:

> I think because of working with [principal X] it's important to do the best. Well, he certainly had a strong influence on me. Always try to be better. I think it would be better for me if *he* were at the helm [now] to make me be better, because we're human beings so we have this tendency to go "(sigh) nobody's watching." You know? [3,936-941]

In order for good teaching to occur, most teachers felt that it was important for their principal to have high expectations of the staff. Although generally deemed desirable, these same high expectations proved to be something of a double-edged sword as they were sometimes a source of frustration for teachers. It seemed that principals could push teachers to excel, but the respondents indicated that there were distinguishable limits of which principals ought to be aware.

Knowledge of the Curriculum

There was a wide range of opinions on the topic of the principal's knowledge of the curriculum. Some participants considered the principal's background training and curricular knowledge to be an important element in determining overall good teaching practices within the school. By the same token, other participants held the opposite view, in which they saw the principal's knowledge playing a very minor role, if any. The amount of direct day-to-day contact teachers had with the principal was dependent upon the size of the school and the number of staff members with whom they usually worked. These factors seemed to influence participants' points of view, and subsequently led to data which highlighted the diversity of their responses.

Two teachers made remarks couched in terms of emphasizing a need to feel as though their subject areas were valued. Whether or not the principal was well-versed in their particular field was of secondary importance. What seemed to matter most was that their subject be looked upon as an important component of the school's overall program. Helen drew attention to this as she described an experience she had in an interview with one of her future principals:

> He was interested, he appreciated the work we did -- in [my subject] as well. I remember when I was interviewed I brought my portfolio, and just when he was looking through it and talking about some of the things that I had done, he would show that he was knowledgeable. You could see that he was knowledgeable in that area already. He said that it was important to him. . . . I think that whatever subject you teach you want to feel that you're valued just as much as everybody else. [5,320-326,330-331]

In Elizabeth's case, one of her principals showed interest in another way, even though he wasn't that knowledgeable about her subject area. He requested that she provide him with a curriculum guide for her subject so that he could read it. Later on they sat down and had a discussion about the teaching of it so that he was more aware. Elizabeth felt that was "very important" and was impressed that, unlike some of the other principals with whom she had worked, he "took an active interest in the instructional climate of the school" [1,327].

In terms of the principals' knowledge having an effect on what happened in the classroom, there were some marked differences in the opinions of the teachers interviewed. Mark was adamant: "No way do I see it affecting. Most principals are principals because they have been successful at what they do. They haven't been particularly academically-oriented people" [2,517-519]. He also expressed the opinion that, "most schools operate in spite of the curricular core in the office" [2,544-545]. He had speculated earlier that his views might be due to his experiences which had been largely in "big schools" [2,469], and that he wasn't sure "how it'd be in a school with nine teachers and a principal who taught half-time" [2,472-473].

Elizabeth described herself as the "expert" in her particular subject area, and that it was important for her to be able to tell the principal what sort of things to look for when it came to evaluation time. "We are professionals, we already know how to teach, we already know what we *should* be doing in the classroom, and it seems to me that we should be building on that" [1,104-107].

Louise's comments provide an interesting contrast for the views expressed by Mark and Elizabeth. She spoke about two principals. The first, she said, "makes no bones about the fact that he knows nothing about" her subject area, and that she "could really take advantage of that" [3,936]. However, she had a much different view of the second principal:

> Oh, he knew everything inside and out. He could call you on anything, and I think that's so scary. You really had to be on your toes, and if you couldn't defend yourself, well, then, he's going to be right. . . . He was *very* thorough. [3,535-541]

Brad described how one of his principals kept in touch with what was happening in the school by making frequent classroom visits. Saying that he respected the feedback he received, Brad drew attention to the importance he attached to the principal's curricular training. In Brad's view, the principal's similar background enabled him to look at his lessons with a more "critical eye." The upshot of this was that Brad felt more motivated to work hard as a teacher.

In Craig's experience, principals would sometimes come in to teach a class, or would pass on materials that could be used for particular lessons. He also said that certain signals were given during "one-on-one" conferences with the principal, or after formal observations, that let him know that principals were aware of where he should be in the curriculum. "The principals I've had are tenured principals who definitely know the curriculum inside and out" [8,285-285].

Helen expected her principals to:

> be aware of current trends in education and have an opinion on them, not just accept them as being right because it's the current trend. They should be aware of what's

> happening in regards to requirements from Alberta Education, especially in high school as programs change and funding moves around. And if not knowledgeable -- I don't expect the principal to know all the answers -- but I would like assistance in knowing where to look. If there's a network of people, then they should know where to send you, or know someone whom you could contact. [5,288-296]

She stipulated that the size of the school played a role in this too. When she was in a larger school she dealt more with the vice principals than the principal when it came to curricular matters.

Opinions varied widely on the impact of the principal's knowledge of the curriculum on classroom activities. Some teachers felt it more important than others that the administrators know the curricular content. Irrespective of this knowledge, several teachers seemed to feel that it was important that the principal at least be aware of what was happening in the classrooms. One way to accomplish this was through regular monitoring and evaluating.

Monitoring and Evaluating

The study participants discussed a number of ways that principals kept abreast of teachers' instructional practices. When discussions came to bear on this topic, the respondents had a tendency to downplay formal evaluative undertakings and chose to focus mainly on the principal's day-to-day monitoring activities. Despite this fact, teachers did articulate a range of opinions on evaluation that warrant examination in light of this study.

When asked how a principal would ensure that good teaching was happening in her school, Elizabeth responded, "I don't know whether performance review has much to do with it" [1,51-52]. Her answer suggested that the impact was negligible and did not seem to influence the teaching process. Similarly, Mark spoke of the minimal role that evaluation had played in his development as a teacher, particularly in the early years:

> I understand, after the fact, that I must have had some sort of an evaluation, or evaluation report, put in my jacket because I got my permanent certificate, and one of the requirements was you had to have an evaluation. But I could swear to you that I was never evaluated. The first evaluation I ever had done was in my 11th year of teaching. [2,85-90]

Several teachers described experiences that they had which perhaps accounted for their strong feelings toward evaluation. Although not always negative, each of these different teachers' stories shows how their views were molded by the way in which their evaluations had been conducted:

> Louise:
>
> In June, finally, in *June* for god's sake, the first of June, he came in, and he was in for one period, and just wrote me a *glowing* recommendation. And I thought, "Geez!" you know? [3,922-925]
>
> Lynn:
>
> He never did come into my room until he . . . had to do an evaluation of the [X] program because that's what the provincial exam was going to be [in]. He was there for about 20 minutes, asked me some questions and then I signed a paper at the end. That was the only evaluation I had. I'm sure he didn't have a clue what was going on in most of the classrooms in his school. [6,829-835]
>
> Elizabeth:
>
> *If* we were observed at all, it was once, it was written, there was no talk involved, and there was no opportunity for response, and you were *lucky* if you got a copy of it. Most peoples' just got sent downtown into their file. So what that did is it turned people off. They didn't want to work for an administration that valued their personal growth so negligibly. [1,74-79]
>
> Lisa:
>
> He came in and looked around, he asked a couple of questions, got some decent answers and left. . . . I thought that in 5 years if you were going to give me an evaluation then you would see me teach, and that would be fair. [7,107-108,112-113]

Louise described how an "awful" round of student teaching had made her very sensitive about evaluations, and she continued to be so many years after the fact. "The minute you mention evaluation to me I just *bristle*" [3,384-385]. She recounted the effect it had on her when a principal she highly respected, and had described as "fastidious as he went through your lesson" [3,385-386], came to evaluate her:

> Every word you said he copied it down. . . . Madeline Hunter was the one he always referred to. He'd give me the seven steps of a lesson plan I think. I can't remember -- there were *thousands* of steps (laughter). And you had to go through all these steps and I think that sometimes you probably really do have to, but I figure I'm fairly effective. I'm sure I could be better, but that was Madeline Hunter, and I'm sure that thousands could follow her example, and do it. But he

> would take everything you did and then go through it with you -- and maybe if I hadn't been so sensitive. He'd *always* say lots of good things, *always*, *always*, but I would only hear those parts that were constructive criticism, and I would take it to heart and be upset. They just seemed monstrous compared to the good things. [3,386-399]

Brad described the formal evaluations carried out by the administrators in his present school as "a job that gets done quickly just because it has to be done" [4,145]. He didn't really see the process providing much help to those teachers who needed it:

> They come in a couple of times a year. But as far as actually inspiring you to do better it's very much just a generic, "You're doing fine" type of thing. I think they're looking more for problems rather than trying to help you to become better. [4,140-144]

A comparable view on evaluations was advanced by Craig:

> One thing I've always been concerned with in these things is it's a sort of watered-down pat on the back. "You're doing a great job," . . . and a lot of times you don't see specific feedback saying, "Well, can we get you some assistance with this?" [8,420-423]

The comments that both he and Helen made showed that they put greater stock in the less formal interactions they had with their principals. In Craig's words, "I think the informal visits probably give them a heck of a lot more indication of what's happening [when] they're just popping in or looking in a classroom" [8,434-436]. Helen expressed a similar sentiment when she said:

> I don't put much value on the formal evaluation. Usually the kids are weird, you're nervous, it's not a natural situation and it's your day-to-day teaching to me, that gives the principal a better idea of what's going on. . . . I think more frequent, more casual pop-ins are more effective and more valid in the sense about information you're getting. [5,383-386,391-393]

The preceding passages suggest that these teachers felt that a principal would get a better idea of what was happening in the classrooms by making more casual, unannounced visits. The following teacher-stories demonstrate that others, too, saw these visits, or "drop-ins," serving several aims.

Respondents felt that one thing that the principals' dropping in did was increase their accountability. Speaking as a beginning teacher, Craig related how his principals' "surprise" visits to the classroom "bumped the accountability up a little bit more" [8,21-

23]. More experienced teachers also spoke of similar effects. Brad related with a certain degree of amusement that the possibility of his principal making an unannounced visit ensured that he was always well-prepared for each class:

> You'd never come in and just run a lesson off the top, because he'd come in three, four, or five times a week sometimes. He'd come in twice in one 80 minute block once in a while. He just happened to be going by, hear something going on in the [class] and come in for 5 minutes and take a look at what was going on. [4,359-364]

In describing the actions of another of his principals who also made frequent classroom visitations, Brad explained how he was motivated by the knowledge that the administrator might stop by to take a look at his class. "It kept me working hard knowing that there was this fellow who gave me the responsibility but also was going to check up and make sure I was doing it" [4,77-79].

In addition to the drop-in visits reinforcing teacher accountability, two teachers described an effect that is more difficult to measure, but to them was nonetheless very important. When principals came to see what they were doing in their classrooms they felt it gave greater value to their work, and the sense of acknowledgement they received helped to motivate them further. Helen put it this way:

> Any feedback that the principal gives you that he knows what's going on, little things, and he appreciates it, that's good. Makes you maybe a little sharper. Just the fact that he *knows* makes me [think]: "Oh boy, I better make sure things are still clicking." . . . Maybe it's just the feeling you get that somebody does care about what's going on, that makes you care more -- although you didn't care less in the first place. [5,700-704,709-712]

Brad spoke of visits he would periodically receive when doing extra-curricular work and described a similar effect:

> You'd be coaching and he'd drop in and talk to you for 5 minutes, just little things like that, but he showed an interest in you. Whereas a lot of the other principals that I've worked for, you'd coach a whole season they'd never see you in the gym, or whatever you're doing. . . . He made sure that he dropped in and he was visible. That was one of the little things, and yet it was important. It made you feel that what you were doing was important, and it was good, it was a really positive thing. [4,242-251]

Perhaps the most common reference to drop-in visits was when teachers were describing how their principals kept in touch with what was happening in classrooms. Although one or two respondents said that there were times when they regarded drop-ins with a certain degree of suspicion, several teachers alluded to the fact that frequent visits by principals did a lot to eventually put them at ease with their presence. In Louise's case, she felt that the visits had little influence on what she did in the classroom, "but it sure made me more at ease with them. So when he did come in to evaluate me, pftt!, I hardly even noticed" [3,917-918].

Brad used similar terms to elaborate on his experiences. He found that the recurring visits made formal evaluations less threatening, and also increased their fairness. He said that because some principals had come in often, he "could trust that their evaluation would be accurate. It wasn't just based on one class or one part of one class" [4,412-413]. He also voiced the opinion that "anybody can be good on any given day" [4,391], and that casual visits by the principal were really "the only way you get a true picture of what's going on in the classroom" [4,396-398].

Brad discovered that when one of his principals visited his class and occasionally took an active role in the lesson, it was a confidence-building experience as a new teacher. Brad became very comfortable with the routine visits. He valued the positive reinforcement, and found that it helped him grow as a teacher. "The fact that he would feel comfortable in your classroom gave you a lot of confidence in what you were doing, and that was good" [4,357-359].

When Lynn first encountered a principal who came into her classroom frequently, it took some getting used to:

> He was in the classrooms a lot. What he did that was different from the first principal I had was when he came into the classroom he wrote things down [and] he talked about them afterwards. He always had suggestions for improvement and things like that. . . . I didn't really take to that at first until I realized where he was coming from and that he was just trying to make you a better person too. Not just telling you what you were doing right but how you could improve things as well. [6,186-195]

Louise had a few reasons for liking the fact that some of her principals were in the classroom a lot. In one case it was done frequently enough that the students had become used to it, and she didn't find the practice disruptive.

> Here's something that he does that I think is really neat -- it's very informal. He'll just walk in your classroom, at any time, just walk in and he'll have a [clipboard], and he'll only be there 5 minutes, but he touches base. . . . He's not in there to bawl you out. He's not in there evaluating you -- he is in a way. He's just having a feely around and being seen, and I think that's really important -- I really like that. Just drop in. [3,905-908,913-915]

Helen felt that she was "comfortable enough" with her subject matter that the principal's unannounced visits to her classroom had a negligible effect on her teaching. Like Lynn, she was unaccustomed to such practices and was initially somewhat apprehensive about his presence:

> At first it was a little weird having him there but, you get so busy with the kids that really you forget about him. Since it was unannounced it was nothing that you could plan for or worry about. So I just chose not to. I guess the major thing is that I was confident enough that what I was doing was valid, that the kids were actually working, so it was no problem. [5,106-112]

Casual visits by the principal were identified by several respondents as an important way of keeping track of what was going on in the classroom. In many cases, the emphasis of teachers' stories was on being engrossed in the business of teaching, and they claimed that the administrators' presence had a minimal impact on what they were doing. Yet the informal drop-in visits seemed to fulfil multiple purposes. By putting teachers at ease, reinforcing what was going on in classrooms, and keeping in touch with both staff and students, the value these teachers placed on informal visits cannot be ignored.

Within this sub-category two teachers directly addressed the issue of the principal "being aware" in more general terms than just knowing what was happening in individual classrooms. It was important to them that the principal keep abreast of what was happening in various parts of the school, and they were quick to single-out those administrators who had not met the bill. Lynn compared two of her principals and emphasized how she thought it was important that they make an effort "to get to know the kids" [6,841] by making occasional classroom visits.

> I'm sure that [principal A] didn't have a clue what *any* children's names were from Grades 1 to 9. . . . In the smaller school they should know everybody's names, and the kids should feel like they know who they are. . . . Well even [principal B] knew who was a good artist in Grade 2. Just because he'd been in and out and had seen what you were doing. [6,837-849]

In discussing another of her principals who made frequent visits, Lynn said:

> That was one thing that was good because he knew what was going on in the classrooms at all times. He wasn't just stuck in the office somewhere and heard about what the grade ones were going to do when I happened to write a letter home to the parents. [6,197-202]

Similarly, when asked what one particular administrator had done on a day-to-day basis to help teaching practices, Louise responded: "He wasn't out of touch. He would wander through the classrooms, he knew all the kids, he knew all the home situations" [3,480-481]. In these instances, "being aware" was far more than just knowing what was happening within the classroom. The teachers' responses seemed to de-emphasize the connection with the teaching act and extended beyond the classroom walls, further shedding light on what their notion of school entailed.

Respondents in this study indicated that it was essential for principals to monitor teaching practices. Teachers downplayed formal evaluations in favour of more informal means of "keeping in touch" with what was happening in their schools. These multi-purpose actions served to motivate teachers, increase their accountability, and, from the teachers' perspectives, helped principals be more aware of what was happening both in and out of the classroom.

Being Visible

Teachers were of the opinion that it was crucial for their administrator to supervise instructional practices, and they attached considerable importance to the act of "being seen" as well. Respondents wanted the principal to exude a presence both on a daily basis and at special events. By maintaining a high profile and being visible, teachers felt the principal could lend weight to what they were trying to achieve.

Two teachers spoke positively of administrators attending and *being seen* at special events. The first was Helen:

> He does feel it's important to show -- if there's an important event -- that he should be part of it as principal and leader of the school. For example, our awards nights are usually MC'd by two teachers, and this year we gave him the option of doing it. He chose to do both the afternoon and evening ceremonies for the reason that it's a high-profile event and it's important. By him being involved in that way it . . . gives that extra perception of it being an important event -- if it's that important the top person is there and active in it. [5,88-97]

The second was Lisa, who said that one of her principals was "very much present" on special occasions such as Christmas concerts, but explained that the same action did not seem to carry over into his day-to-day practice. "The kids always make a joke that he's just a tape-recorded voice. He has some real people talents but I don't think the kids see them very much. He's very much an administrator" [7,2256-259]. She also said that although he is seen as being a "student advocate" and someone who "speaks well for the kids, he's *not* seen in the hallways, and so they have no sense of him" [7,267-268]. She concluded by asserting her view that "if there was ever a strength that a principal should have, then [it's] being a very visible kind of person" [7,271-273].

Elizabeth and Brad each spoke in more general terms about principals being out and about, and both expressed satisfaction with those practices. In Elizabeth's case, a new principal spent several weeks sitting and visiting with students, walking about and talking to them to get their input and opinions on the school's existing policies and programs. He also sat-in on a number of classes on an informal basis "to get a feel for his new school" [1,377]. According to Elizabeth, "people really appreciated the fact that he was willing to get out there" and that "he wasn't afraid of getting mowed-down in the hallways" [1,378-380]. In Brad's instance, he referred to one principal as "*very* visible in the hallways" [4,227], and he described how he would come and talk to teachers who were on supervision to find out who the "trouble-makers" were on any given day. "He always made you feel that he was there. It was his job to oversee, or to be a part of the school, the big part, the leader of it" [4,232-234].

The connection between an administrator maintaining a high profile and the process of teaching was a very real one for several respondents in this study. They felt that it wasn't enough for them to just keep apprised of what teachers were doing in their classrooms. By being seen in the hallways and visiting classrooms, principals seemed to convey a message of reassurance to teachers that they were not alone in their endeavours. In this sense, the principal was often portrayed as a figurehead or unifying force who made their teaching more consequential.

In addition to discussing those actions of the principal which were designed to ensure that good teaching was occurring, respondents also talked about how administrators had furthered teachers' professional growth. Their comments are detailed in the section which follows.

Staff Development

Seven of the eight teachers involved in this study referred in some way to the concept of staff development and spoke about how their principals approached the topic. Some told of formal P.D. sessions, whereas others focused on less structured activities that their principals initiated in an attempt to improve staff members' effectiveness. None, however, spoke more extensively about the topic of staff development than Craig:

> One way in my experience that principals have ensured that they have effective staff members [is] by keeping them green. One saying was, "Stay green and grow," that we picked up. Don't stagnate, don't do the same things over and over again. Get in there and be on the cutting-edge. [8,81-86]

He went on to identify a variety of staff development measures his administrators had undertaken, including

> school-wide teacher effectiveness programs and other practical experiences for beginning teachers and tenured teachers as well. Things like the teacher-effectiveness program, cooperative learning programs, and just encouraging professional development in a number of ways. Particularly the first school I was involved with, this was something that most staff members were more or less

> expected to do -- although they are in my current situation as well. I guess that first situation I just felt it a lot more. [8,24-32]

Depicting the teacher-effectiveness course he had taken as a "life-saver," Craig acknowledged that the program had been "a huge commitment on behalf of the administration for the staff to be involved" [8,232-233]. He often spoke of professional development opportunities being encouraged or provided by principals as a method of alleviating problems before they began. Recalling the first time he had a behaviour disorder child in his class, he felt that the principal had exhibited "leadership" by arranging for a consultant to assist him, thus "ensuring" that he was "going to be effective with that child" [8,351].

In addition to the principal using professional development in the "pro-active" sense, Craig also drew attention to occasions when his principal had taken steps to assist teachers he identified as "at-risk." He used both the terms "encouragement" and "strong-arm" to characterize the actions the principal had taken. "They've had counsellors in or people from downtown assisting these people. Part of the action of the administration there was to encourage them to get some assistance that will help out in the classroom" [8,344-347]. Similarly, he reminisced about a fellow teacher the principal had steered toward a different assignment as a first step in eventually pursuing a leadership position within the district. Craig felt that such action encouraged professional growth in teachers, and because it had been done very openly, it fostered a positive environment within the school.

Focussing on himself once again, Craig mused about the benefits of an inservice that he had taken at the principal's recommendation:

> If I hadn't been encouraged to take that, and there hadn't been that sort of leadership present, maybe I wouldn't have taken it -- sort of a lackadaisical attitude. . . . When the opportunity was presented it seemed that there was the leadership there and it was suggesting that I take this sort of inservice. I did and I've seen it manifest in students being more effective. I feel a lot more effective in the classroom, and I think that's a pretty good example of how that sort of effectiveness has been encouraged by administration. [8,213-222]

Professional development was also the topic of many other teachers' conversations. Their stories highlighted how various principals advocated participation in what formal and informal opportunities there were available, such as Helen's example of a principal arranging release time for teachers to engage in peer observations. "To encourage good teaching, one thing the principal does is he *highly* encourages us to visit other schools to find out about their programs and their facilities and how they do things" [5,894-896]. In other cases, more formal professional development sessions were the focus of principals' efforts.

During her interview, Elizabeth contrasted several different schools in which she had worked. In one, teachers "were encouraged to take inservices . . . [and] to go to conferences" [1,419-420] and there was a "big budget" that was earmarked for professional development. She was overwhelmed at first because that had not been the case at her previous schools. "Just the opportunities that were there that were *not* there in any of my other schools" [1,441-442]. Of the first school she had taught in she said, "It certainly was not made clear . . . that on-going professional development was important" [1,448-450]. Whereas at the inner-city school in which she worked, the circumstances necessitated completely different priorities. "We didn't even have a professional development budget. We were feeding kids out of supplies, equipment and services money because [they] were coming to school and they weren't eating" [1,443-446].

Other teachers, too, made distinctions between the way staff development had been handled in various schools. When talking about her experiences, Louise called attention to both the benefits and drawbacks of working with an administrator who was an enthusiastic proponent of professional development. She related how one principal continually strove for the betterment of staff members:

> He tried his *damnedest* to make us more professional, more effective, and sometimes I wonder if it wasn't too much. . . . You would either have to be able to handle that sort of growth -- and it is stressful to be pushed like that -- you would either go with his way or you would have a really miserable time teaching with him I think. . . .You never could relax much there. I think in other schools you could relax a lot more. You don't *have* to grow professionally -- it's not an expectation. . . . He just *constantly* tried to make you better. Which like I said was infuriating at times, but boy, it did a lot for me -- professionally. [3,260-266,409-411,472-474]

Similarly, Brad described a specific incident in which he and other teachers on staff had been "strongly encouraged" by the principal to become more computer literate by taking a PD session or computer inservice. He alluded to the long-term benefits of the principal's urging when he explained how he eventually transferred to a "completely computerized" school. "Looking back on it, if [the principal] hadn't done that, . . . I'd have been lost" [4,755-756].

One year Brad had to teach out of his subject area, and was assigned to teach some "academic" courses. Recalling how it had compelled him to improve his teaching practices, Brad said that he was pleased with the principal's apparent show of confidence in his abilities to give him such an assignment. "That made a big difference, just knowing that if I was going to be out of my area . . . that it wasn't just a Mickey Mouse thing" [4,791-794]. Brad further related how it forced him out of the "comfort zone" of his own subject where there wasn't as much preparation required as when he had first started to teach. In his words, because they "were academic-type courses, you *knew* that you had to be prepared well and you *knew* that you had to be organized in order for the kids to benefit from it" [4,781-784]. He thought that the increased attention he put into the preparation for these courses carried over to improve the planning he did in his main subject area too.

> That was a really good thing. I didn't like it at first, but looking back on it, it probably kind of regenerates your enthusiasm. You work really hard and you go, "God, I did this all whenever I was a first-year teacher! Why am I doing it again?" But it helped a lot. [4,818-822]

Although teachers generally agreed on the value of professional development, there were some marked differences in terms of where they thought such initiatives should originate. The interviews brought to light an interesting contrast of views between Elizabeth and Louise. Elizabeth spoke of a trend toward greater staff involvement in decisions concerning professional development:

> When I think of my first three schools, I think of *the principal*, but when I think of [school X], I think of *the staff*, and us all together. We decided . . . as a staff that on-going professional development is important. *We're* making that a priority, and I think that's a real shift. [1,455-461]

Whereas Louise saw the principal playing a more central role:

> I think, all teachers should be encouraged -- and now its got to come from the principal -- because if your leader isn't interested in professional growth, you're going to have a hard time being stimulated. You can get so swamped in just the day-to-day existence. [3,959-963]

Despite differences such as these, all respondents saw professional development in its various forms as an important component of good teaching. Most viewed the principal as a catalyst for staff development by heightening teachers' awareness of PD opportunities. Effective principals encouraged teachers to take advantage of inservices when available, and they provided the required administrative support to enable them to attend.

The category "The Principal and Teaching" has been an overview of the data collected which directly linked administrators' behaviour with the teaching act. Respondents expressed opinions as to how teaching practices were affected by principals with high expectations, and they also spoke of the impact that the principals' curricular knowledge had on teaching. Stories of what administrators do to supervise teaching activities were presented in the sub-category "Monitoring and Evaluating." The fourth sub-category contained teachers' perspectives on the principal upholding a discernible presence throughout the school, and their views of the principals' stance on professional development were examined in the final sub-category.

The preceding two categories have mainly addressed the data which illustrated how principals' actions influenced the task of teaching. The synopsis of respondents' stories in the remaining categories elucidate the impact of principals' actions on teachers as individuals.

The Principal as Educator

Teachers often spoke of their principal as the individual responsible for overseeing instruction in the school. However, the analysis of the interview transcripts led to the creation of an additional category of data in which teachers consistently portrayed administrators as fellow educators. Whereas data in the previous categories centred on what principals did to ensure that others exhibited good teaching practices, the stories in this category focus more on those actions which depict principals as modellers and allies in the teaching endeavour.

The Principal as Teacher

A number of the participants in this study spoke about their principals as teachers. A few had not worked with administrators who taught classes and were thus unable to comment, but five respondents expressed opinions that they had developed as a result of their experiences.

Those who spoke of the principal as a teacher usually did so in a favourable manner, but they had somewhat different reasons for thinking that it was important for the principal to have at least a partial teaching assignment. Both Louise and Elizabeth found that when principals taught classes they were more "in touch" with what teachers encountered on a day-to-day basis. Louise spoke with admiration of a principal who had traditionally taught at her grade level saying he "thoroughly understood" the types of concerns that she had. "They can just leave you totally isolated, floundering, if they don't realize the sorts of problems that can happen in elementary classrooms. . . . If you haven't taught them, you'll have no idea" [3,1069-1070,1087-1088]. Expressing a similar conviction, Elizabeth related how her job was made less arduous in a school where

> all of the administrators taught. It really made them understand when you went to them with a management problem. "Look, this kid just won't do this and he won't do this." "Oh well, guess what? I've got him in [my class] and you know he's the same in there." All of a sudden you are equal. It's not like you're going to your father and saying, "Oh, gee Dad, I can't handle this. Will you please deal with it for me?" sort of thing. I think that really contributed to the climate of the school, to just that feeling that we're all in this together. That it's not us and them. [1,244-253]

Reflecting on the various principals with whom she had worked, Helen focussed on one and revealed a further reason why she thought it was important for the administrator to teach a class:

> He also taught so that kept him in touch with the students. . . . I think it's very easy for an administrator to lose touch with reality, and to forget what it's like in the classroom . . . The students have a different perception of the principal when [he] also teaches them. The principal's a little more reachable, a little more human when [he] is also involved in the instruction. [5,346-360]

She went on to express the view that it was important for principals to "value the experience" they have in the classroom, and to teach their subject "with energy and enthusiasm" [5,357-360]. Like Elizabeth, Helen explained how such factors shaped her perception of the principal, and from there she made a connection with her teaching. "Having the principal also teach would influence my feelings toward the principal as a *colleague*, and the more positive feelings a staff has towards each other influences how they teach" [5,362-364].

Lynn also related her feelings about how principals chose subjects to teach in smaller schools, and spoke of them keeping a balance between their teaching and administrative duties. She explained how one of her more effective administrators always chose to teach those subjects with which he was familiar, and "he took his teaching as being as important as being the principal" [6,648-649]. When leftover classes were "picked-up" by principals at scheduling time, she felt administrators sent the message that "they were putting more emphasis on being a principal than they were on being a teacher" [6,655-656]. Lynn described how such actions helped to set the educational tone in the school, and how in her view, influenced overall discipline.

During his interview, Craig advanced a further benefit of having principals instruct classes. Reporting how one of his principals had "just loved to teach," he explained how students and staff had gained from his expertise as both a teacher and a teacher of teachers:

> You couldn't keep him out of the classroom sometimes. He was a real leader in that way too, just by rolling up his sleeves and getting right into the fray. Working with kids in a positive way, and working with staff members too. He was in doing some team teaching, or at times peer teaching. [8,247-252]

In this case the principal shared particular lessons with teachers, and would sometimes demonstrate them as well. Craig followed-up his comments by stating that he thought it was important for administrators to be "leading by example" when it came to teaching, and he speculated as to future directions in light of his recent observations:

> You have expectations of your staff and you demonstrate what you're willing to do as well to get into the fray. And sadly, . . . maybe that's not happening enough. The principals are becoming managers, not the "principal teacher." Maybe they'll change the name to reflect the times. [8,256-262]

Those who spoke of the principal as a teacher highlighted several reasons as to why such an arrangement was advantageous. Foremost among these was that respondents felt principals had a greater understanding of teacher concerns when they also taught classes. The resultant narrowing of the gap between the principals' world and that of the teachers was seen as being generally supportive of good teaching practices. Few respondents, however, saw the administrator fulfilling the role of principal teacher, although the notion of the principal leading by example through teaching was discussed by some. For the participants in this study, it seemed more important that their concerns be understood by administrators who kept "in touch" than they be shown how to improve on their teaching practices.

The Hard Worker/Leading by Example

The teachers in this study made it clear that it was important for administrators to be people who gave the impression that they were hard workers. Their comments to this effect were often closely linked with those having to do with leading by example, and unlike Craig's earlier remarks, were not confined to the teaching act alone. As they related their stories, respondents expressed the desire to have principals who demanded "as much or more of themselves" [4,645] as they did of their teachers. Virtually all of the teachers' responses in this sub-category addressed those principals' actions they felt were effective, and that established the sense that "there was nobody in that school who worked harder than that principal" [1,230-231].

Louise was particularly impressed with a hard-working principal who had been able to develop a close rapport with the parents and the community, and she told of the positive spin-off that this had. She explained how the parent advisory group raised "thousands" of dollars at the local community bingo hall, and once they saw that the principal was "keen" and dedicated, it only took a short while before the money began to "flow" into the school:

> You wouldn't believe what we could get. . . . We had in our staffroom *shelves* and *shelves* of teacher materials. Games, books, professional resources, it was great! "You need something in your room? . . . Just apply for it and you've got it. . . . Books? You want a set of novels? We'll get 'em for ya." Wow! [3,733-746]

In this case, the principal's work ethic enabled him to tap-in to a financial resource that might have otherwise been unavailable to the school. The interviewees also highlighted the effects of a hard-working principal on those who worked within the school.

Describing an administrator he termed "a leader through example," Brad talked about a principal who showed "a real interest" in the types of things he was doing with his classes:

> It left you with the impression that what you were doing was important, so you would work harder -- because it was important. It was important to this guy who was in charge that you do well and therefore you tried your best to do that. . . . He also put in lots of hours, and therefore, if the boss was going to do that, you kind of felt, "Well, if he's going to work that hard for it then I should as well." It worked well. It worked really well. I was really impressed by him. [4,321-330]

Speaking about the same principal, Brad also commented on how he had become "a much more effective disciplinarian" [4,708-709] as a result of observing the principal in action. Describing how he had "sat-in" on more than one occasion while the principal dealt with students he said, "It really opened up my eyes to a whole different realm of discipline techniques that I'd never really seen before" [4,730-731]. He felt that having the opportunity to watch the administrator "made a world of difference," and helped him to become a "better teacher."

Lynn characterized "effective" principals as those who arrived at school "in good time."

> They didn't just come driving up to the school 10 minutes before the bell rang, so that if you needed to see them before classes started, they were available. They gave you the impression everyday that they were there to work, and it was an enjoyable place to come to work. It wasn't something they just rushed to at the last

> minute and then were gone again at the end of the day. That's just a subtle thing that you notice, and parents I think notice that too. [6,551-558]

Helen and Brad provided analogies to this story when they too spoke about principals expecting teachers to be at school for a specific time. In so doing they also underscored the importance of the principal displaying a stellar example of the desired behaviour. "He works late, comes in early and expects everyone to do the same" [5,818], was Helen's observation. Similarly, Brad related how his principal

> expected you to be in your room and he was always there. He wasn't the kind of person who'd show up at 8:30 and say, "Oh well I've got a meeting planned right now." He made sure that that kind of stuff was done either before or after so that he was free. Whenever he expected us to be free he was as well. So if we wanted to go to him he was available also. He didn't demand things of us and then not also demand them of himself. It was a little thing but it was really noticeable. [4,234-241]

Helen explained how one principal had strongly encouraged students to become involved in the extra-curricular activities at the school, and had expected the teachers' participation as well. Rather than simply giving a directive to this effect, he assumed the task of working with one of the school clubs himself. As Helen recounted, "He set an example as well as saying this is the way it will be" [5,201].

While drawing some comparisons between what he felt were "effective" and "ineffective" administrators, Brad remarked that effective principals were those who put in the extra work required of the position.

> They worked hard at being a *good* administrator. They worked hard at their people skills, they worked hard at being visible in the school. . . . If you as a teacher saw them in the hallways all the time chasing kids to pick up paper, "Stop that running!" or whatever, it made you do that as well. You said, "Gee, if the boss is going to do that, I'm going to do that too." You knew you had support. You knew that if you chased a kid down for throwing a snowball and took him to the office, that that would be viewed as something that the principal would have stopped as well, and he would deal with it for example. Whereas the ones who were ineffective, you would bring that same situation to the office and [they would say], "I've never seen that happen!" Well they couldn't have because they were only sitting in their office the whole time. [4,657-671]

In this passage, Brad revealed not only his concern that principals work hard, but that they set an example for others as well. In addition, he touched on issues of visibility, and showing support for teachers, each of which are dealt with in other areas of this document.

The administrators' organizational expertise was twice referred to by respondents as an illustration of the principal leading by example. Describing two principals who were very organized even though their leadership styles were considerably different, Lynn said,

> organizational skills I think are very important. . . . If the principal's organized he gets the teachers organized. As a first-year teacher I think that's one thing that you really need is somebody to help you to get organized, or otherwise you spend a ridiculous amount of time on things that don't even matter. [6,918-919,928-932]

Addressing the same topic, Brad provided a specific example of the impact one principal's organizational skills had on him as a teacher.

> He was very well organized, and because he was organized he kind of led through example. . . . [After arriving at the new school] the first thing he did was put a Mac in his office, and he started being organized. If you wanted to see something he'd call it up on a screen, make you a copy and say, "This is what the meeting was about. These are the minutes." He didn't have to scramble through this dog-earred file of papers. By seeing how well that system worked, you wanted to get into that as well. I wasn't computer literate at all when I came to [this district], and after seeing how effective it was for [him], I was *determined* to do that. [4,738-750]

The data in this sub-category attest to the significant influence on teachers of an administrator who "works hard" and "sets an example" for the rest of the staff. Principals with these attributes were acclaimed by respondents for their positive impact on teaching practices in the schools. Also viewed as beneficial were other explicit acts which had shaped teachers' views of administrators as fellow educators. The interview data presented in the following section relate teachers' stories of receiving assistance from their principals.

The Principal Gives Assistance

While reflecting on how various principals had assisted them to become better teachers, respondents invariably looked back at their first few years of teaching and spoke of what the principal had done to get them off on the right foot.

Lynn, the one who spoke most extensively on the topic, related stories about the "subtle" things her first principal did to help her as a beginning teacher:

> He didn't come into my room the first few days and say, "Here's the list of things you have to do." He just let me muddle around for my first couple of days and get to know things. Then he'd come in and he'd sit in a class for maybe half an hour or so and he wouldn't write anything down. He just kind of wanted to get to know

> me and the students. I'd say he was probably in my classroom a fair bit that first couple of months, but he didn't really make heavy duty suggestions, just little tiny ones so it didn't wreck your confidence or anything like that. If memos came from the office [saying] this had to be done or that had to be done, he'd come and go through them and show me where the materials were and that kind of thing. [He] was more subtle than being real direct about his guidance, which was good I think. [6,44-56]

Throughout the course of the year he continued to assist her as required. Saying "he was just kind of there if you needed him" [6,389], Lynn explained how the principal let her establish her own guidelines for acceptable behaviour from students. Appreciating the independence, yet knowing that "he was always there, he's that close if I ever needed anything" [6,754-755], Lynn spoke of the long-term benefits. "I think that helped me all through the years because . . . I knew what was acceptable, or what I could personally stand as acceptable" [6,757-760].

There were times during that first year that the principal needed to play a supportive role for the inexperienced teacher: "I remember parent-teacher interviews my first year . . . I was positive I was going to get eaten up alive by parents" [6,374-377]. Lynn recalled how the principal came to her beforehand and gave her some verbal reassurance "that really helped" [6,388].

He showed his support in various other ways too. Relating how she was due to be evaluated by the administrators from district office, Lynn described what her principal did prior to their arrival:

> With planning and so on he was really good. When he knew that I was going to be evaluated he wanted to look over my plans to make sure I had everything in order before the evaluators came. . . . As a first year teacher I was really happy because I wanted to make sure I had everything I was supposed to have, and he approached it in such a way that it wasn't like he was checking up on me. He was just going to make sure that he was doing his job . . . by making sure I was doing my job. [6,356-374]

A final way that this principal gave Lynn assistance as a first-year teacher was by providing her with feedback on her teaching practices. She explained how she had requested his input on the types of things that she had been working on with a particular group of students:

> When you first start teaching you're not exactly sure. You *think* that the kids are at their grade level but you're not sure because you have no experience to relate it with. I was worried about a couple of kids and their reading, and this was about Easter time, and I was sure that they weren't doing as well as they should. Before that report card went out I definitely wanted to be able to tell the parents if I had plans to hold them back. I was *really* nervous about that so he came in a couple of times and he took notes on what I was doing. [He] went over them with me and gave me a few suggestions and told me where I was on track. [6,398-409]

Other teachers, too, related a few of their experiences with those principals who had given them assistance. In some respects their stories were similar to Lynn's. Brad, for example, spoke of how his first principal helped him in the early part of his career:

> He was very supportive in terms of helping you with discipline and things like that. Very supportive. As a new teacher he helped me a lot with some of the concerns of: "Was I doing the right thing? I'm having trouble with this kid. Is it me?" Just things like that. He was really, really good. [4,280-285]

Helen explained how her first principal helped to ensure that the new program she had started in junior high had a greater chance of succeeding. "He was very keen on recruiting students [because] it was important to him to have a fair number of kids in there, so he talked some 'gentlemen' into joining, and that was good" [5,317-320].

Craig spoke with appreciation as he recalled a principal who had assisted him with the preparation for some special needs students that the school had had prior experience with. He felt that the "forewarning" and support staff help he was given enabled him to be prepared "in-advance" [8,553-560].

In contrast, Louise characterized her experience as a first-year teacher as "unpleasant" [3,36], and her principal as "not supportive at all" [3,71]. Without his assistance, she explained how she relied on other experienced staff members to help her get through the year:

> He just left me out in the cold pretty-well all year. So what happened was [another teacher] became my mentor. I don't know what I would have done if he hadn't helped me. I didn't even know how to do report cards. . . . I don't even know if I really knew what the *Program of Studies* was. [3,46-53]

When those teachers who addressed the topic of the principal giving them assistance reflected on their experiences, they tended to think back to their first or early years of teaching. In most cases they spoke about how helpful the principal's guidance had been, and they sometimes talked about how the actions had a lasting effect on their current practice. Louise, who did not have a positive experience in her first year, summarized the attitudes of several of the teachers when she made the remark: "Your first year or two you sort of flop around like a dead fish, and if you don't have good guidance from an administrator . . . I think a good administrator can be a foundation for good teaching" [3,1094-1097].

The Principal and Discipline

Few of the teachers involved in this study spent a significant amount of time directly addressing the topic of principals and discipline. Throughout the transcripts there were sporadic remarks about principals who did or did not have "control" in their schools. Comments such as the following help to illustrate the range of responses offered by teachers:

> Louise:
>
> Boy! He could clear the halls in a hurry! That was *good*. You didn't have to worry about discipline problems because there were very few. [3,194-196]
>
> I'm not sure he was as strict with the Junior High as I thought maybe he should have been. [3,400-401]
>
> Lynn:
>
> He had discipline problems right away. Plus, then he was the principal so he didn't have anywhere to go. When he had problems he was the end of the road. [6,626-627]

Two teachers explained how they had been informed by their principals that they could send students to them if there were problems: "[He] said, 'Anything that you feel is unacceptable you send them right away'" [6,717-718]. However both teachers quickly qualified their statements by saying that although they appreciated the support, they preferred to deal with their own discipline matters as much as possible, and that sending students to the office "would be a last resort, so [that] it still had some clout" [8,617].

When discussing discipline, Helen related how one of her principals had become "more receptive to change" and had allowed the teachers to "modify the expectations" of the school for their own classrooms. Indicating that she preferred this system, she said:

> I appreciate his confidence in us, in our ability to have a well-managed classroom under our own rules. . . . Being trusted enough to set class rules, and having the freedom to establish a classroom environment best suited to my teaching style is very important. [5,564-579]

Rather than describing actual disciplinary actions undertaken by principals, respondents instead had a tendency to voice concerns over the administrator supporting them when conflicts with students arose. For the most part, teachers wanted to handle their own discipline cases, but they needed to know that they had administrative support for their actions. Citing an example of a principal who did not follow this practice, Mark made the following comment:

> The only rule by which he operated was, in cases of dispute between the teacher and a student, the student was always right. . . . It was a disaster because there was a constant friction between what the kids saw as operating in the school and what the teachers wanted to have operating. [2,209-225]

Conversely, Lisa related favourably the practice of one of her principals:

> He tends to back teachers before kids when issues arise, but he's *always* a student's advocate. To the parents he will say, "Let me check that with the teachers," but then he will say to the teachers, "I want to know exactly what happened." [7,207-210]

While discussing discipline in general terms, Lynn stated that part of her approach to classroom management was that she wanted her students to know that she was "being supported by this other person as well" [6,675]. Explaining how she attempted to deal with incidents in her classroom "as much as possible," she went on to say:

> I want to be able to know that if I have to send a kid [to the principal's office] then I'm going to be supported. The kid's not going to have to sit outside the door for four periods and then come back and say, "Well he never showed up," and you have to deal with it the next day. [6,685-690]

Although not often addressing the issue of student misbehaviour, teachers sometimes described actions of the principal that in their view were impediments to overall discipline. Respondents spoke of a need for consistency and stability, and they expected the principal to lead by example and to be visible and aware. When administrators failed to show adequate support for teachers in matters of student discipline, the participants in this study felt as though their efforts were being undermined, and they subsequently often became resentful or disrespectful of their principals.

As alluded to above, even though the topic of discipline has been treated separately here, it is tightly intertwined with several other categories presented elsewhere in this chapter. The teachers' stories suggest that it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate those actions principals take in connection with student discipline that do not have ramifications for several aspects of school life. Consequently, issues related to discipline have been dealt with indirectly in numerous locations throughout the presentation of the data.

The data contained in this section provide a summary of participants' opinions as to those things administrators do as fellow educators. In addition to outlining their views on the principals' actions with respect to discipline, respondents discussed the effects on teaching practices of having principals who taught classes and who were perceived to be hard workers. Teachers disclosed that they wanted the principal to be a person who led by example, and a few related stories of how administrators had helped them to improve as educators.

Each of the sub-categories above highlight those things teachers see principals doing that help them as individuals, as opposed to more directly influencing the teaching process. The data presented in the next category extend this notion to include the respondents' views of the principals' impact on school climate.

The Principal and Climate

The teachers interviewed for this study elaborated on many ways that they saw the principal working to establish and sustain good teaching. They described factors which influenced the type of working environment or climate that evolved in their schools, and they spoke of the role they saw principals playing in that context. The anecdotes which follow underscore the more personal aspects of what happens in school, and help to illustrate how teachers feel about themselves and teaching.

Recognition of Teachers' Efforts

The issue of teacher recognition was directly addressed by four participants during the interviews, and the analysis of the transcripts revealed a very distinct pattern of responses. The first cluster of remarks focussed on saying "thank you" to acknowledge teachers' work, and the richness of the stories speak to the weight they gave such action.

One of the teachers' most serious concerns was that principals show their gratitude for a job well-done. In Lisa's words, "it doesn't take much to say 'thank you.' Usually [people] do well with just a pat on the head, it doesn't need to be much, and that shouldn't be forgotten" [7,333-336]. She then went on to explain how she thought her current principal is

> relatively good at that -- much better than I've ever seen. I still think that seems to be a stumbling-block for them that they forget. It doesn't take much to say "thank you", but in general that's what he's done. He's made you feel appreciated, and in doing that he's gotten more work out of us. [7,337-340]

She also explained how at various times throughout the year the administrators regularly provided the staff with a cake as a token of thanks for the work the teachers had done.

Similarly, Louise, in talking about different principals with whom she had worked said, "The ones that really impressed me the most showed appreciation" [3,963-964]. She related different ways that principals had accomplished this, but the predominant custom was to do it verbally or through a written note. As she said of one principal:

> [He] would often write a note -- after all his report card comments -- he would say something specifically to me at the bottom. And that by god would charge me up and keep me going for the next 2 months! No matter what else he'd said, if he just would have something positive to say at the bottom, and personal, make it personal, but positive, that'll go so far. [3,970-975]

The importance of saying "thank you" came up in another of Louise's stories as she explained that a lack of feeling appreciated had led her to seek a transfer from one school to another. In the interview for the new placement she was asked why she wanted to leave her current job:

> I said, "I think I could work myself into the ground, and it wouldn't even be noticed." Boy did that pay off! Every time I do anything, [the new principal] writes me a note: "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" And now sometimes I feel really stupid, because he'll put notes in my mailbox thanking me for [a variety of things], but it means a lot, and maybe he's learned something from that too. [3,846-852]

Helen, too, had a lot to say on this subject, and she reminisced about some of the principals who had given her verbal and written feedback. Calling them "a really nice touch" [5,161], she expressed a preference for written notes or letters:

> They're still on my bulletin board in my office. It's a good feeling as a teacher to get a note. Especially hand-written or on a special little funny picture paper from your administrator. I prefer that *much* more than the monthly evaluations that the teachers get along with the students. Those seem contrived to me. I would much rather get a little note tucked in my mailbox when I've done something extra-special. It's much more meaningful when done at the time. [5,148-154]

Helen then summarized her comments by saying:

> You do what you do mostly for the kids, but it just makes you feel good about yourself and it's nice to have the support. It's very important to have the support, and of course it makes you feel a little better and you're nicer to your kids maybe or you try and do more. It doesn't take much to make us happy. [5,167-171]

The second cluster of responses having to do with teacher recognition targetted preparation time allocations and extra-curricular responsibilities. Louise explained that some principals tried to ensure that all teachers had roughly the same number of preparation periods unless they were involved in coaching or some other extra-curricular activities. She was of the opinion that "everybody was happy" with that arrangement, and said, "It was nice, you felt, 'Hey, I matter, I count'" [3,698]. Contrasting that experience with others, she exhibited a great sense of injustice and frustration when discussing principals who didn't take steps to recognize the extra work that she and other teachers did in the school.

Helen also briefly addressed the topic of time compensation for extra-curricular work. Speaking of her entitlement to time off "in lieu" because of the "extra things" that she had done when working in a large urban school, she drew a sharp distinction between that and her experiences in rural schools:

> In the smaller places you were expected to do all that without time compensation. You just feel more respected, more valuable, more worthy . . . here, because they say, "Yes your time is important," and, "If you're going to give extra time, then we'll give you some time off." [5,215-220]

The third area within this sub-category incorporates remarks made by two participants which highlight the significance of having their efforts recognized. Brad stressed the positive impact a principal had who took time to show an interest in what he was doing in his classes and extra-curricular assignments.

> You'd be coaching and he'd drop in and talk to you for 5 minutes, just little things like that, but he showed an interest in you. Whereas a lot of the other principals that I've worked for, you'd coach a whole season and they'd never see you in the gym, or whatever you're doing. . . . He made sure that he dropped in and he was visible. That was one of the little things, and yet it was important. It made you feel that what you were doing was important, and it was good. It was a really positive thing. [4,242-251]

Whereas Brad spoke of the personal aspects of having his work acknowledged, Helen indicated there were broader educational advantages too. In her view, principals indirectly ensured good teaching was happening in the school by urging staff to set up displays of students' work. She also discussed how some principals advocated having different classes make presentations at school assemblies, "sharing" with others what they where doing. In one instance, sharing also occurred at staff meetings. Teachers were encouraged to bring their students in to have them show the rest of the staff their projects. Helen felt that such practices not only fostered "positive teaching practices," but also put "value on what was happening in the classrooms" [5,687-691].

The data illustrate that teacher recognition can take many different forms, but all of the above comments emphasize the importance that it had for the respondents in this study. Many teachers had an express desire to be told when they were performing well. Related to this were stories having to do with the mental well-being of teachers, in particular, those actions and events which influenced teacher morale.

Teacher Morale

In different ways, several teachers pointed out concerns they had with the morale of various staffs on which they had worked. In three cases, teachers identified morale problems when describing significant changes that their schools had undergone. The circumstances were not the same in all cases, but their stories portrayed things such as teachers avoiding the staffroom and feeling like they didn't belong, feelings of intimidation, infighting, and general discomfort with the working environment. The net result can be summarized concisely by Helen's observation: "You can just tell; When the teachers are down, the school is down" [5,368-369], and a similar one made by Lynn:

> When things aren't going well at school then that kind of carries over in the tone. I don't think it necessarily carries over into your classroom so much with your students, but it definitely carries over in your associations with your colleagues. [6,481-485]

Other respondents, too, articulated views on teacher morale, and sometimes spoke of how various principals had tackled morale issues in the past. The stories which follow provide an interesting spectrum of views and experiences.

Craig described the actions of a new administrator designed to bolster the mental well-being of people in the school. He described how the principal encouraged staff members to be involved with "school-wide" activities and "theme days . . . that make everybody psychologically feel better" [8,168-169].

One of Elizabeth's principals issued a memo to the staff telling them to improve morale after he had been informed by his superior "that the school had a morale problem" [1,146]. In relating how this was received by staff she said,

> Oh well, it was a joke. It was just ridiculous. People had stopped trusting him, believing in him -- doing anything more than they had to -- long before that came up. So that was just another example of a ridiculous, outdated management style. [1,150-153]

The concern over the principal's treatment of the staff was unmistakable as Mark recalled how one of his early principals carried out his duties:

> [He] would sit in the staff room with a stack of cheques in front of him and the register book. The teachers lined up in the hall outside the staff room, and we came in one-by-one so that he could give them the cheque and have them sign the register. We were incensed that a professional person would be treated like this. These people [were] jostling in the hall -- you were supposed to be in alphabetical order. There were lots of jokes about going down to the office and all that sort of [thing]. He ran the school like it was his. His money, his teachers, his staff . . . [2,501-509]

In describing another principal's actions, Mark again drew attention to his feelings about the workplace and its administration. "People hated his guts, from time to time, but everybody was sorry to see him go, because they knew that he'd taken a school in trouble, and turned it into a real professional, prestigious place to work" [2,452-454].

Finally, Mark provided an example of an administrator he termed "a human relations operator" who "made funds available all the time" for professional development activities:

> He likes to make people feel good about themselves. "Are you getting a little tired? This gettin' to ya? Go on a conference. Go on a trip. There must be something you can go on." Oh ya there is, OK. "Oh, you had to have some paperwork in today? Forget the paperwork -- I'll pretend I lost it on my desk. Go, go. Book a flight, go." He didn't deal with the issues, but he made people feel good. [2,291-297]

When asked if such an approach ever led to problems later on, Mark responded, "Ya, cumulatively. It's just like snow in front of a snowplow. This business back here is nice and clear, but you've got a hell of a pile in front of you" [2,299-301].

The above examples help to illustrate not only the importance of teacher morale issues to these participants, but also draw attention to the varied responses these people had to the principals' actions. By the same token, a striking similarity existed between the comments of Louise and Craig when discussing principals, teachers, and their inter-relationships. They both saw the principal as a key player in ensuring that everyone in the school felt good about themselves. In Craig's opinion, "a happy staff is a healthy staff, and I think to have a happy classroom translates into happy students or effective students as well. And that's top-down, like a trickle-effect" [8,649-651]. Louise provided an analogous perspective:

> [Principals are] there to run the school and they have to develop a relationship with teachers and the community, and the kids. So you have to have healthy teachers -- healthy, happy teachers -- in order to have healthy happy classrooms, and once you have kids that are happy you're going to have parents that are happy. That doesn't mean you fawn over them, but if the kids are happy coming to school and your principal is caring, I think that's got to have a lot to do with it. [3,1000-1006]

Several teachers referred to different staffs they had been on as a "team" or as a "family," and some talked about ways that the principal attempted to enhance that relationship. Louise described how one of her principals, a person with whom "you could instantly have a good relationship" [3,881-882], would do things to make people feel good about their work:

> He would be on his way to the staffroom -- from wherever -- and I would be teaching, and he'd stand at the doorway and he'd make a face at me. It'd be really informal and -- so then I'd crack up, right? The kids would see us laughing together and then they would laugh. He could have that relationship without losing discipline. There wasn't a big discipline problem [there]. They could see that we were real people, and that we enjoyed each other, and that he cared for the kids. I cared for him [and] the parents liked him. [3,1025-1033]

In her words, the staffroom was a place where you'd "just laugh, laugh all the time. [It was a] *really* good way to break the ice and feel good about what you were doing -- laughing and having a good time" [3,882-884]. This story mirrored another she told of a different school she had been in. She recalled that "the staffroom was *fun*. It was fun going to the staffroom" [3,487-488], and it gave her the opportunity to see that the principal "was as human as the rest of us" [3,489]. In reminiscing about those staffs and others, Louise said, "It's like a family, which is an extended family with the parents out there too. The closer the family, the better you can work out the problems" [3,1118-1120].

Lynn used the term "family" when she reported how a school was very different from one year to the next under two different principals:

> [In] my second year of teaching everybody left the school [after] the 15 minutes you were instructed [by district office] to stay afterwards . . . Whereas my first year of teaching, we'd be sitting around in the staffroom after school and people would look at their watches and say, "Oh! It's five o'clock, I have to go home and start supper!" Nobody was in a hurry to leave . . . it was a small staff, it was like a family. Everybody sat around and told jokes and stories. [6,448-458]

She went on to say that in the first year her principal had often remained in the staffroom to share his stories along with the staff, but that at the same time he maintained a certain distance that sent the message that "he was 'one of the gang' . . . but in a way he wasn't either" [6,463-464].

Similarly, Lisa described one principal whom she felt was

> conscious that he spends so many lunch hours in a week with the staff, that he sits down and visits with people. He walks in and makes some cheap shot at somebody. He has a great sense of humour and people share that with him. [7,529-533]

For her, it was important that the principal be seen and interact in this way with the staff.

Mark saw other advantages in having a very close-knit group of people on a staff. Relating his experiences overseas he spoke of how staff members did a great many things together away from the school. Characterizing it as "almost incestuous in some cases," he explained:

> It was that closeness that allowed us to work together because it was easy to see what each others' strengths and weaknesses were because you saw them all the time. I think that if you let people see that they work better as a group. [2,183-187]

In addition to having a good time in the staffroom, numerous teachers talked about staffs engaging in various social functions outside school hours as well. Craig related how principals encouraged things like formal dinners and birthday celebrations, and several teachers mentioned going to the bar on Friday afternoons. In most cases the principal was a part of such events. It was clear from the teachers' stories that such functions were important psychologically, and they gave teachers a chance to "get to know one another as people" [8,495-496].

Teacher morale sometimes hinged on different concerns for the participants in this study. Regardless of the variations, a common thread running through the teachers' stories was the prominence they gave to issues of morale. The principal's role in determining or dealing with teacher morale was less clearly defined. Teachers' views were often entwined in other matters, such as those of trust and respect.

Through the course of the interviews, teachers were invited to reflect on those actions of principals that had built or enhanced a trust relationship between them. The ensuing sub-category is a presentation of the data that resulted from these conversations.

Building Trust and Respect

The concept of trust between teacher and principal was interwoven throughout the interview transcripts. As was the case in some other areas, trust meant different things to different individuals. Teachers generally spoke of things that principals had done to either instil a sense of trust, or to destroy it completely. Many teachers found it easier to talk about those times when trust had been absent, and had to put greater effort into recalling the positive actions of former administrators. A comment made by Mark captures neatly the sentiments of several of the respondents. "What can I say? I could probably give you more stories on the opposite side. What principals have done to undermine teachers, but that's not your focus" [2,94-96]. This aside, by relating their sometimes vivid experiences, teachers managed to make their views on the topic of trust evident.

Elizabeth identified trust as "the most important element in the relationship" [1,159-160] between the principal and the teacher. In her view:

> If you can't trust anyone you don't know whether what's being said to you is the truth, or a manipulative device to get you to do what he or she wants you to do. I know I can't work for or with someone that I don't trust. [1,161-164]

Craig expressed a similar feeling when he talked about one of his schools. He explained that one of the reasons he had for leaving the school was that he "didn't have that trust relationship after a while" [8,512-513]. He later clarified his statement by explaining that in that situation "sometimes things were said and not acted upon, or not done," or, "one thing [was] said and a different thing demonstrated" [8,514-515].

The concept of words matching actions was brought up by two other teachers as well. After providing an example of this happening in her recent past, Helen said:

> When administrators say one thing and then change their minds or pretend that they never said it, that would certainly not instil trust. If you follow through on what

> you say and you're honest about it, if you make a mistake or you have to change your mind, just admit it. Then people respect you more, and I think trust you more too. [5,491-496]

Lisa related a story about a new principal who came to her school and told the staff that things were "going to change" when discussing "one of the biggest issues" in the school at that time. She went on to state that at dismissal time "he was out of the school before any other teachers. So he quickly lost any credibility with all of us" [7,160-161].

Two teachers said that principals who "kept confidential matters confidential" [2,355] helped to instil trust, and provided examples where that had not happened. Helen went so far as to extend her view even further: "Lack of respect would be more like it. And I guess with that would come trust as well, because you're not going to confide in someone in whom you don't have respect" [5,253-255].

Brad also felt it necessary to delineate between the terms "trust" and "respect" when discussing his "less effective" principals. "I don't know if I'd call it trust. I'd call it more respect. I didn't respect them because they didn't seem to know what they wanted" [4,507-508].

Helen related how she had engaged in conversations with all of her principals at one time or another about "non-school topics," and said that those talks "on a personal level" had allowed the principals to "reveal some things" about themselves. She felt the resultant "lowering of barriers" had led to greater "two-way trust" [5,461-465].

Mark and Lisa both alluded to the importance of the teachers' feelings when talking about trust. Describing one of her recent principals Lisa remarked:

> He has a great deal of trust and respect for other teachers, and I *always* feel that. He is very considerate of people's feelings. And you know it seems to me that that's what teachers do to kids, and then it shouldn't be that difficult for us to do to each other. And that's why he's so good at it. [7,519-524]

Along similar lines, although being somewhat philosophical at the time, Mark said, "I suppose one of the things is that a principal who recognizes that teachers are human beings, that is, that they are fallible creatures, and doesn't particularly punish them for their fallibility, goes a long way to establishing trust" [2,373-376].

Four teachers referred to a very specific action of the principal that held great importance for them when it came to developing a trust relationship. Craig, Louise, Lisa, and Lynn all talked about the principal supporting them in difficult situations with parents or students as being of paramount importance in developing trust. "If there's been some confrontation with a parent and the principal has backed me up, then I know, I *know* I can count on him" [3,991-992]. All the teachers' stories were very similar, but Lynn's provides a fitting synopsis of the four. She knew she had gained the principal's "trusting support" when he "stuck up" for her when she had a problem with a parent:

> I have to say he was a good principal. I liked his professionalism in a way because if you had a problem with a parent or student, he took your position, he'd listen to your side. He'd want to know what was going on and he *always* stuck up for what you had said to the parent or the student. He might disagree in private, tell you what he really thought or what you should be doing, but he never showed a divided situation to a parent or to the Board or anything like that. [6,214-221]

In addition to the principal showing support for the teachers in parent or student matters, it was also important for it to be shown in other areas too. Lisa explained how she had a real appreciation for one principal because he had "stuck with something that was a little bit of a risk" [7,423-424] on more than one occasion. Whereas Louise related in detail how she had lost trust and respect for two of her principals because they had not been "supportive" in circumstances connected with her personally.

Principals who went through "the proper channels" were identified as those who built trust. Lisa said of one principal: "I'm not so naïve as to think that administrators don't sit and discuss some of the things we do, but you would never know that in terms of his behaviour or how he treats each of us. He's very good" [7,242-245]. In contrast, Helen shared a scenario in which the principal of the school had children who also attended the same school:

> The school kids always hung around at his place. He listened to what they talked about and maybe took it too much as law, or the truth. . . . I can recall the principal mentioning to the staff things that the kids were talking about at his home. Although he'd always end it off with a laugh saying, "Ah those kids," but you never were sure how serious he was. [5,403-411]

Several teachers spoke about principals being too "buddy, buddy" with their staff, but Helen was the only one who directly addressed the issue of trust when talking about it. It was her position that she couldn't respect a principal who had treated the "people on staff not as professionals, but as buddies," and engaged in "inappropriate" teasing. She explained that as she didn't respect him, she therefore couldn't trust him [5,258].

Also mentioned as important in building a trusting relationship between teachers and the principal were concerns ranging from "non-verbal clues" to hearing what had been said to other teachers on staff to the reassurance and help that a principal gave a first-year teacher. These data help to illustrate the wide variety of things teachers identified when discussing how principals went about gaining their trust. Trust and respect are somewhat fuzzy concepts that seemed to be influenced by many factors, not the least of which were principals' actions or inactions as perceived by teachers.

Respondents in this study expressed a distinct need to feel as though they were being listened to, thus revealing a further major influence on climate, and therefore also on morale and trust. The sub-category "Listen to Us!" is an overview of what teachers had to say about "being heard."

Listen to Us!

The descriptions of interactions with principals illustrated the value teachers placed on having input into school decisions. When their opinions were sought and listened to, participants said that they felt important or valued, even if final decisions were made that were not what they had hoped for. Elizabeth described how one of her principals gathered input before making an important decision:

> It was still his decision to make, but at least it was an informed decision. You never got the feeling that it was just a meaningless exercise, and that he had already decided. Because he was such an ethical, principled man, I know that that was never the case, that he honestly wanted to know what his staff thought. Oftentimes, aloud, he would say at the beginning of the staff meeting, "Well this is how I feel about this issue, but I really need to know what you people think, and maybe there is a different way to go on this. If I had to make the decision right now without hearing from you this is what I would decide." Then after hearing from

> staff on that issue, he changed his mind, and made what was probably the better decision because it was more informed. Then of course the staff felt better because it was clear that what they said mattered. [1,175-188]

Similarly, Lynn spoke about situations in which she had worked where principals requested her opinion. She indicated that it influenced her feelings about the principals' effectiveness.

> He has to be the principal sometimes and make the final decision but I always felt that what you had to say counted and mattered and was considered very carefully before a final decision was made. As long as you feel like you have a say in the process, I think that goes a long way to feeling like your principal's effective. [6,806-811]

Brad echoed a similar view in his description of how one of his "effective" principals handled decision-making. He too said that the principal made staff members feel important by seeking their opinions. "His philosophy was very much, 'Whenever we leave this staffroom everybody has to agree to a decision'" [4,161-163]. Brad thought that this method avoided the creation of "winners and losers," and he went on to say:

> It ended up being a decision that we could all live with. We could all support it in front of the students, the parents and things like that . . . because everybody had an opinion in the compromise. Everybody could go in and positively sell policies or positively sell a change in discipline, or whatever was happening. [4,176-189]

Lisa described her experience in a new school that had no operational guidelines in place when it first opened. The principal worked closely with the staff and explored their views before enacting policies which may have affected them.

> From the very start we made the decisions about how the school runs, the structures, the rules. That's a real catch-22 -- because once you make the rules you're stuck with them. But he has allowed *all* the people on his staff to help him make the decisions about rules. Nothing has come from the top in terms of being imposed. We have made those decisions together. [7,297-307]

Another thing Lisa felt was important about this same principal was his openness to differing points of view. During the development of a particularly contentious policy, a decision was not forthcoming: "Finally we went with a three-day trial run. He didn't really want to do it and he came back at the next meeting and said, 'You guys were right, this works.' And he does that, *often*" [7,315-318].

Louise expressed a similar view about one of her administrators. “He was flexible, and he would bend. If you felt really strongly about something, say a new L.A. strategy, and you argued with [him] for it and convinced him, he could be flexible and change his mind” [3,468-472].

In Craig’s experience teachers were encouraged by administrators to join committees as a means of soliciting their views. He indicated that although it was good to have the opportunity to express his opinion, he sometimes felt as though his input was a largely symbolic “rubber stamp” on decisions already made by the principal [8,177-182].

Helen described how a professional development day was used to develop a new mission statement for the school. Under the guidance of the principal, the entire staff was involved in the process. “Even things like the time-tabling, the teachers, whoever was interested attended the meetings that came up with different proposals for timetabling, how we want to schedule that” [5,635-638]. Although she felt some aspects of the process were “kind of hokey,” she summed-up by stating “It was good and it *was* worthwhile, and it did actually use our ideas” [5,661-662].

A source of irritation for most of the eight teachers in this study was having a principal who did not listen to their ideas or involve them in decisions. Comments such as “your ideas were heard but not listened to” [5,505-507] gave a sense of the frustration they experienced. As Helen explained, she sometimes felt as though she had “been made a fool of” when her ideas and suggestions were not taken seriously. “I’m sure that’s not the intent, but that is the result. You just want a little bit of respect for your ideas, some support” [5,532-534].

Similarly, Elizabeth commented: “In my experience, the principals who I’ve had the least respect for were the ones who did not involve us in decisions, did not inform us as to what was going on, . . . and who did not trust us” [1,358-361]. While discussing budgetary concerns, Brad gave a parallel view as he identified some practices that he felt worked against the idea of encouraging good teaching. He sensed that his professional judgement was being called into question when his requests were met with resistance, and he didn't think that it helped to "build confidences as a teacher" [4,854-855]. He also pointed out that such actions didn't encourage initiative or long-term thinking on the part of teachers.

> The effective principals that I've worked with, and the ones who "made" you be a better teacher, were the ones who gave you a budget but trusted that if you ordered something it was needed in your department, that you weren't just spending money foolishly. [4,855-861]

In so saying, Brad expressed a strong desire as a professional for his opinions to be "held valid" by the administration, and he wanted to feel as though the principal trusted him to do his job.

A final anecdote helps illustrate that when a principal neglects to treat teachers' opinions fairly, there can be a considerable impact on the working relationship. Lynn related a story of a principal who regarded female teachers' opinions less seriously than those of the males. The resultant backlash had school-wide implications and led to a great deal of anxiety and antagonism. She explained:

> If you feel like you're being valued for what you're doing by your peers and your principal then I think you try to do a better job and you'll be more cooperative. But if you're being told what to do and you don't agree with it and you've been told your ideas don't matter, then pretty soon anything -- and even good ideas he may have had -- heels were dug in and people . . . got ornery. [6,139-150]

Most of the teachers in this study expressed concerns about being "heard" and having their opinions considered even if their ideas couldn't be acted upon. The teachers' sense of whether or not they believed that their administrators were listening to them often determined the degree to which their need to be trusted and valued as professionals was met. It also seemed to influence how well the staff worked together as a team, and helped shape the overall working climate in the school. As Lynn remarked, "I think that if you feel like what you have to say matters, then you can work together a little easier" [6,811-819].

In summary, factors related to school climate were addressed by respondents in this category. Teachers emphasized the worth they attached to having their efforts recognized by their principal, and they spoke of various ways in which this had happened. They also discussed other issues connected with teacher morale in general. Some participants explained how administrators worked to enhance teachers' feelings of well-being, and they shed light on the connections they saw between this and teaching practices. Other data presented in this category highlighted those principals' actions teachers saw as building trust and respect. The data also spoke to the importance teachers attach to having a say in decisions, and accentuated their need to feel as though their opinions are valued.

In this study teachers were asked to specify those administrator behaviours which they saw influencing teaching practices. The analysis of the transcripts established that a significant component of the interview data was devoted to descriptions of the principals themselves. Thus a fifth category, "The Principal and Leadership," a compendium of teachers' views on principals' personal attributes and their styles of leadership, was created.

The Principal and Leadership

All teachers in this study offered vivid portrayals of administrators as individuals, and certain personalities evoked stirring recollections. The teachers' stories, often aired with great passion, testified to the lasting impact of some principals' orientations to administration and approaches to leadership. Their stories are contained within the sub-categories which follow.

Drawing a Line, or Closing the Gap?

Six of the teachers interviewed discussed their interpersonal relationships with the principal, and the comments they made were in some cases startlingly similar. Describing in detail the types of things that their principals had done in the past, many seemed to favour getting to know the principal as an individual and doing things together as a staff, yet most expressed a desire for the principal to maintain a certain "distance" from the teachers. The excerpts below provide a sketch of the different views they held on this sometimes highly-charged topic:

> Brad:
>
> He was the principal and he was your friend, but there was also a line there, and you knew that whenever he came to evaluate you he would do it professionally, and not let the friendship interfere. [4,272-275]
>
> One fellow tried to be really, I guess friends. There wasn't going to be that, "I'm the boss and you're the employee," it was more, "We're all buddies and we're all in this together," and people really took advantage of that. I think that'd be [the case] in any situation. Unless there's a line, people will run all over you. It didn't work well for him. He just didn't have the personality to make that happen. As soon as he tried to be your friend, then it blew apart in his face. I guess people just didn't respect him enough to be able to have that happen. [4,440-448]
>
> Lynn:
>
> He was your best friend "kind of," but you still knew that there was that line between he was the principal and you were the teacher. The kids knew that too. The roles were well-defined. . . . He was a leader. He wasn't just "one of the gang," but he *was* one of the gang too at the same time. [6,69-73,81-82]
>
> I still think they need to be part [of the group]. The first principal in [school X], if we went out for a drink or something after school, he would come for a while. He didn't necessarily stay as long as everybody else all the time, but he was there, a part of the gang for part of the time and then, you know, gone. [6,489-492]
>
> Lisa:
>
> He is not as personable as a lot of people talk about in Junior Highs, where they tend to have a much closer relationship with principals. There's a little bit of a reserve, a little bit of a distance between him and lots of people on staff. I think that's because he is an administrator and that he's in his office much of the time. [7,283-289]
>
> He's comfortable. He will talk to you about [personal things] that make him very human to us and make him part of the crew. At the same time, everybody knows he's the captain, you know? [7,548-552]
>
> Helen:
>
> I like the principal to remain some distance from the teachers -- not be too buddy buddy. I think of [principal X]. He was too casual and too gossipy. I didn't like that. I think I would have liked him better and respected him more had he a little more professional decorum. [5,874-879]

> I think [principal Y] didn't have that separation between the staff and him. He felt comfortable talking with us about personal things and he showed us when he was feeling different things and when he was upset or happy, and I appreciated that. That didn't bother me about him. [5,882-889]

> Louise:

> Everything was really personal with [him] too -- really personal -- which at times could get frighteningly intense. It could help with the relationship, or it could hinder it. Maybe you didn't want to be that close. [3,293-296]

Teachers found it easier to work with principals who struck a balance between being a friend and colleague, and being their superior. Those administrators unable (or perhaps unwilling) to find this "middle ground" were usually spoken of in less glowing terms, as were principals who failed to make it clear to their staffs where they "stood." Respondents also had definite views about other aspects of the principals' leadership style as well.

By the Book

Louise and Mark both described principals with very structured approaches to dealing with their job. Their conversations indicated both positive and negative sentiments toward this style of leadership. Louise enjoyed the efficiency of a principal who did "everything, *everything* . . . 'by the book,'" but she occasionally found his inflexibility too restrictive. "If it's not in the policy book . . ." [3,705-706]. Her depiction parallelled one of another principal recounted by Mark:

> He was a very "rules" man. A stack of rules on this side of his desk and a stack of procedures on this side. If you asked him a question that couldn't be dealt with [by] looking in those two dossiers, the question ceased to exist. It was no longer a valid question, because here were the rules. . . . [He] was a very easy man to work for, because you knew that he was rules. If there were no rules, there was no discussion. He taught me the expression that, "If you're not prepared to take 'no' for an answer, don't ask the question." Simple. [2,112-116,254-257]

Both of these individuals used similar terms when they discussed two other administrators they had encountered as well. In both cases the principals were very strict, which generated some concern from the teachers, yet they seemed to appreciate the smoothness with which the schools ran under the principals' leadership. The following extracts from their interviews help to illustrate the similarity of their views:

> Mark:
>
> He was a little fascist, but he was a good principal. . . . He understood one way of doing things -- the right way. Kids didn't screw up, the teachers didn't screw up, because that wasn't right. You did what you're supposed to do and you could do as much beyond that as you wanted until you screwed up and then, bang!, you were in trouble. Everybody knew that, and we all worked for him. He was a very good principal. [2,410-417]
>
> Louise:
>
> He *ran* his school -- he sure didn't have any discipline problems. . . . He ran a tight ship, but it wasn't a warm ship. . . . He had high standards, which was good. But he didn't seem to make the effort to develop rapport with the students. It was more like, "I'll be the boss, and you be the underlings." Or, "I'll be the sergeant, and you be the privates. And you do as you're told." It seemed to function all right. You always hear derisive comments from kids about principals, but not all that much there, and they certainly listened. Boy! He could clear the halls in a hurry! That was *good*. You didn't have to worry about discipline problems because there were very few. [3,89-92,187-196]

In addition to the views expressed above, the teachers also voiced opinions about other aspects of their principals' orientation to the job.

The Principal and the Job

Four teachers expressed opinions about how they thought principals viewed their jobs as administrators of schools. As respondents described the ways that they had seen principals approach their duties they tended to compare effective principals with those they termed ineffective.

Craig commented that he thought it took "a certain kind of person" to be an effective principal, and he went on to say:

> The ones who can reflect, who have had those experiences in the classroom, and get back in the classroom, in my experience seem to be the most effective people. . . . The people who have the most excellent staffs or *ensure* that they have effective teachers, then they are pretty effective themselves. [8,661-669]

After revealing that she had worked with at least two principals who gave her the impression that they "didn't like kids," Louise conveyed her sentiments about principals and how they dealt with what she termed life "in the trenches." In her view:

> If you can't deal with those sorts of things, or you don't want to deal with them, you just want to be the paper-pusher, you can get away with it -- it's been done for years -- but I don't think it's healthy. [3,1014-1017]

Likewise, Brad and Lisa both examined how they saw principals viewing their job, but broadened their discussion to include what they saw as the principals' longer-term preparation for the position. As she spoke of a "very skilled" principal, Lisa asserted, "his training has been that he has always wanted to be principal, that he sees himself as being a good facilitator of other people doing their jobs, and that's why he's so good at it" [7,517-519]. Along very similar lines, Brad reflected on his experiences with different administrators:

> The people who view a principalship as, "Well I finally made it now I can put my feet up. I'm out of the classroom. Deal with some parents, central office," that type of thing, I found tended not to be effective. . . . They viewed the principalship as a reward. Whereas the ones who were effective viewed their principalship as, "I'm going to take on this new job that's got added responsibilities and I'm going to do well at it." It wasn't a reward, it was something they had worked for. It was a goal of theirs. [4,648-655]

The connection between the principals' orientation to the job of administration and good teaching practices was not always clear. However, the administrator's approach seemed to figure prominently in the teachers' conceptions of what school should be. Respondents had firm convictions about what principals' actions made their task easier, thus indirectly influencing what happened in the classrooms.

Approachability

While discussing how principals ensured their schools were offering quality instructional programs, most teachers, in one way or another, made mention of the principals' "approachability." They wanted to be able to feel comfortable about going to the principal with questions, problems, or to seek advice. As an example, Lynn related how as a first-year teacher she had felt that she could bring any concerns she had to the principal because he was "open." She was careful to qualify her remarks, however. "They have to be somewhat approachable I think, but then not seem too buddy, buddy either. There's a fine line there" [6,955-956].

Louise related how she found one of her principals difficult to approach. Initially she had been hesitant to take her concerns to him because she found him intimidating, but she explained that she managed to eventually overcome her apprehension.

> [He] intimidated me because he seemed to me a very, very intelligent, really cerebral person. You wouldn't be able to hide much from him -- so I thought. . . . I learned when I was upset about things to go to him and tell him, but it took a lot of guts, because his intelligence frightened me. I know that's stupid. It's a stupid thing, but he just seemed to me to be so cerebral. . . . That's how I felt about him, but I grew to love him very much as a person *and* as a principal -- and at times I could have shot him. [3,246-248,344-351]

Speaking further to the topic of intimidation, Louise reiterated the importance of teachers being able to approach the principal with concerns. Thinking aloud she wondered about connections with her childhood perspective of visits to the principal's office, and her musings spoke volumes about her notion of "the principal":

> When a principal calls me still now I think, "Oh god what have I done?" You don't go rushing in there for commendations. The only reason you're usually called in is you've either done something wrong, or they want you to do something *more*. [3,519-523]

Brad described how one of his principals worked to overcome the intimidation that some staff members felt over going to see him about various issues. He explained how the principal was very open and honest about his intentions "right from square one."

The topic of approachability was occasionally addressed by teachers when discussing principals' interpersonal skills. Because of the large number of administrators encountered by the teachers in this study, and due in part to the individual differences of the respondents, the range of opinions expressed was far-reaching indeed. Generally speaking, teachers drew attention to the need for principals to have so-called "people skills." Several, like Lisa, expressed amazement or anger at the lack of interpersonal skills that some principals possessed, while others saw them as being less important. Mark, for example was relatively content as long as the principal left him alone and didn't "interfere" with his teaching:

> They put another man in the job who had very outward, political, happy smiling face, big warm handshake, arm around the shoulder, pat - pat person . . . and he was really a nice man. He was a lot of fun to work with. When we went on our annual fishing trip he'd buy a couple of cases of beer to send along with us and that sort of [thing]. He was a very nice guy. He knew nothing about curriculum, but he didn't meddle. [2,99-106]

Louise's comments attest to the effect that a "cold and aloof" persona had on her as a teacher:

> Throughout the whole year I couldn't get close to him. . . . There was no conversation other than "business at hand." . . . [In the morning] he'd stand outside the staffroom, glaring up and down the hallways. He was so "proper" and authoritative. He smoked a pipe . . . and he would "acknowledge" you (head nodded) but not much more than that. Not any thing like, "How are you doing? What's [your husband] up to?" or, "How's the [place] you're living in?" There was no stated or obvious concern, and I didn't feel like I could go to him for help. Maybe I could have -- maybe I should have -- but I didn't feel like I could. So I stayed a lot up in my room and worked, and developed a good relationship with kids, and just sort of stayed away from him as much as I could. [3,41,165,172-183]

This individual stood out in sharp contrast when compared with another of her principals:

> [He] wasn't cold at all. You could instantly have a good relationship with [him]. Laugh, laugh, laugh in the staffroom. You just laugh, laugh all the time. [It was a] *really* good way to break the ice and feel good about what you were doing, laughing and having a good time. [3,881-884]

While these anecdotes focussed on the principals' approachability, the conversations often broadened to include other factors as well. Three interviewees, in particular, shared the view that being a successful principal called for a certain personality type. Their stories are contained in the next sub-category.

Personality

When invited to discuss what in their minds had made individual principals effective, teachers sometimes had a difficult time articulating their thoughts. Several times they spoke of personality when talking about successful and unsuccessful principals, either saying certain individuals did or did not "have the strength of personality to pull it off" [4,458]. Their comments reflect that despite the administrators having the knowledge required to carry out the tasks of their position, teachers thought people also need certain other qualities in order to achieve success as school principals. An excerpt from Lynn's transcript provides a very good example of this sentiment. Immediately prior to this stage of the interview she had been discussing the importance of the principal having what she termed "leadership skill."

> Part of it I think has to do with personality, and that's really hard. That's something you can't learn. Some people . . . can know everything they should do and they don't have the personality to bring it off to work with other people. You know how some people can work with people and some can't? Some are leaders and others are followers. So number one I think that's a really important thing. [6,309-315]

When asked if the principals' teaching expertise or experience had influenced the teaching practices in the schools in which she had worked, Lisa responded:

> I think there's a personality type more than experience that leads to good principals. I think that people who are willing to take a few risks and people who are good leaders, whether they're back there in classrooms or whether they are as administrators, people just tend to have trust in them. So to me I don't know whether it has much to do with practice. [7,384-389]

In answering the same question about one of the two principals he had earlier labelled as "effective," Brad used similar terminology:

> I think in his case it was just more his personality that influenced. He was a really strong personality. . . . His teaching background wasn't that extensive . . . so it wasn't that he'd brought all these experiences from wonderful places, . . . but he was an idea man. He was a really strong leader because of his personality. He could, and I don't really know why, but he could bring people together. "We'll take all your opinions and let's work with them and let's get this done." [4,418-429]

Although each teacher above said that a certain personality type seemed to make better principals, none was able to be much more specific. When it came to their views on professionalism, however, respondents were more forthcoming with details.

Professionalism

Throughout the interviews, most teachers referred in one way or another to the types of things that they liked and disliked about the various principals with whom they had worked. Several described certain administrators being very "professional," but as the term seemed to have different connotations, it is perhaps more significant that all teachers that spoke of this trait did so in a positive manner.

One of Brad's principals left a lasting impact on him:

> I see him and I have nothing but respect for him because his ideas are very much "We're here to do a job and our job is education," and, "We have to run this, not as a business because we're dealing with people, yet as a business. We're here to promote education and it's our job to do that." It was very professional. [4,205-211]

Lisa, too, held one of her administrators in high regard and described him as an individual who was "ultimately always fair," and who preferred to "follow channels." She went on to say that "He's first and foremost very professional. You can rely on him. He's a very politically wise person and you can rely on him to give you a fairly honest and fair answer when you have an issue" [7,204-207].

For Lynn the importance of "being professional" was clear as she spoke at length about one individual who "wore his professionalism right out there for everybody to see. . . . He was professional enough that he would at least let you have your say, and you felt like what you said mattered and was going to be considered whether that's the way he went or not" [6,170-171,178-180]. In addition, there was a milieu of "little things" that sent messages to her that her principal was "professional." As an example Lynn related how some of her principals were not always careful about using teachers' first names in front of students, but she told of one administrator who viewed this practice in the same way she did:

> A student wouldn't know what my first name was if he had anything to say about it. He was always very professional that way, so it was just little things like that that let you know right away that he was very professional, but it also let the students know. [6,533-537]

Sometimes it was the principal's apparel that was important:

> He always wore a suit and a tie . . . just little things like that, but I mean it just spoke "professionalism." He had his tie on all the time. I remember when we played basketball one time and he had on shorts and a tank-top . . . it was just like he had taken off his principalship when he took his jacket off. [6,510-522]

Lynn explained that the way the principal had conducted the staff meetings added to her perception that he was a professional. "It was done *like* a meeting. You read the minutes from the meeting before, and any old business, any new business, and then you voted" [6,499-502]. Her experience prior to this had been one where "there was no set agenda" for staff meetings and instead the staff usually discussed "what the principals talked about at the principals' meeting" [6,504-505].

Two other respondents, although not addressing the topic of professionalism directly, made very clear the type of principal behaviour that they strongly disliked. In general terms their experiences were often related to the principal "blowing up over things," "yelling," being "irrational," or having "emotional outbursts." One teacher said, "That's the way he had treated me all year -- just demeaning" [3,83-84], whereas another teacher recounted:

> I was totally terrified of him, and found that the only time he ever said anything to me was fairly condescending . . . definitely a male-female kind of relationship where he thought that he was fairly dominant. He really annoyed me. [7,92-96]

In each case it left the teachers feeling upset and angry, and it cultivated within them an intense lack of respect for the principal. In discussing the types of things she thought the principal *should* be doing, Helen said,

> I think it's just having a more quiet but positive attitude. Being calm when the waters are not calm, being like the rock or the foundation that never flies off the handle, that always counts to 10 before reacting. Those kinds of things filter down and make it a positive learning place. [5,590-595]

After reflecting on her experiences in one setting, she went on to say:

> If from administration the attitude is "redneck," and not really professional or serious, or respectful, or dignified, then that filters down. If the attitude from the top is one of mutual respect, personal integrity, kindness and compassion, sensibility, common-sense, it also goes down to the teachers and to the students.

> The administration sets the tone for what happens in the school. I really believe that. [5,237-243]

As evidenced by the statements above, several teachers were unable to refrain from commenting on their principals' personal characteristics when discussing what they did to enhance teaching practices. On numerous occasions respondents offered opinions as to those attributes they saw as desirable in administrators with whom they would have to work. A collection of these virtues are presented in the following section.

Virtues

Some teachers seemed to make a point of trying to separate principals' personal and professional characteristics as they described their actions. When asked what principals had done to gain her trust, Elizabeth replied that "they have not been afraid to let staff know what they stand for -- where their ethical focus is" [1,167-168]. This seemed to be important for her, as she later demonstrated by characterizing one of her principals as "one of the few principled administrators left" [1,493-494].

Being "honest" and "up front" were some of the other traits that surfaced in the conversations with the teachers. Lisa had "a great deal of trust" in a principal whom she described as "very direct and honest" and who she thought didn't have any "hidden agendas." Conversely, she said she had "very little use" for a principal who had "lied" to the staff about a particular situation.

Craig provided a succinct summary of the views expressed by several of the teachers when he said:

> Being "true blue" -- trustworthy -- demonstrating consistency, integrity -- I guess is the biggest thing that they can do to -- and sometimes it's very difficult to do -- but . . . if a principal's honest, and forthright, even though it might not be a popular decision that they're making, that would certainly build trust. Personally for me it would. [8,532-538]

As with some of the other sections in this category, the links between the virtues of the principal and good teaching practices were not always obvious. The qualities identified by teachers appeared to be significant determinants of *how* the principal would act, which in many cases seemed more important to teachers than what the administrators actually did. The data showed that teachers wanted principals to act consistently, predictably, and reliably. Those administrators identified as being "honest" and "forthright" could usually be trusted to do so.

The category "The Principal and Leadership" has been a presentation of the data portraying administrators as individuals. Throughout their interviews, respondents consistently made reference to the personal characteristics of their principals when relating the types of things they had done to ensure good teaching was happening in their schools. They discussed principals' orientations to the job, and offered views on their many different administrative styles. Teachers shed light on how important it was for them that the principal be approachable and have strong interpersonal skills, and they frequently referred to personal and professional qualities that they thought desirable in an administrator.

The detailed analysis of the interview transcripts culminated with the creation of the preceding five categories of data. Embedded within this data were five identifiable themes which gave greater understanding to the meanings teachers attached to the actions of their principals. Those themes are presented in the next section.

Themes

The participants in this study recounted far-ranging experiences as teachers in Alberta schools. An on-going scrutiny of the amassing stories uncovered several common threads of meaning woven throughout the interview transcripts. The ensuing pages contain an overview of the themes which emerged following a more in-depth analysis of the data.

The first theme embedded in the data related to the way in which teachers characterized their experiences with different principals -- the "good guys" and "bad guys" of their career. The second theme described the significance of the school environment to the teachers in the study -- the desire for the workplace to be a pleasant one to go to each day. Issues of professional autonomy and the sense that teachers wanted to be "able to do what they've been trained to do" [1,34] were addressed in the third theme. The fourth theme centred on the teachers' need to feel that they were an important component of the educational system. Similarly, teachers often spoke of the need to feel supported in their work. Articulated in numerous ways, this final theme was prevalent throughout the interview transcripts of all participants.

Heros and Villains

Early in the data-gathering process it became apparent that teachers wanted to relate their stories by describing the actions of principals who they associated with either positive or negative experiences. Their tone of voice and choice of words often bore testimony to the lasting impact of these heros and villains. Rarely described were those principals who fell in the "grey middle ground" between the two extremes.

Our discussions often began by teachers relating a story of a "hero" or a "villain" from their past, and then for purposes of comparison they would next describe their experiences with an administrator representing the polar opposite. When describing what they saw principals doing to ensure good teaching practices were occurring in schools, most teachers referred to the person they characterized as their "best principal." Several respondents described how the positive influence of their "best" principal carried forward, in some cases for many years: "I *still* do my report cards bearing in mind the comments that he made to me" [3,506].

The *way* in which teachers described some principals often revealed as much about their impressions as their words. One teacher illustrated his great admiration for a former principal when he said:

> He took pride in having a good place and it kind of rubbed off on you. He worked really hard to make his school a good thing, and he made you do that as well . . . You worked really hard because he was really working hard to hold up his end, so you wanted to hold up yours as well. He was very effective, very effective. Some people didn't like that, but I found it really good. . . . I see him and I have nothing

> but respect for him because his ideas are very much: "We're here to do a job and our job is education." [4,81-85, 205-207]

By the same token, the consequences of working with villains were equally lasting: "My experience with him was a relatively negative one, and it kind of left that impact on me for all time" [7,47-49]. Similarly, at least two teachers labelled the period under certain administrators as "disasters."

Although they were inclined to promptly label principals as "good" or "bad," teachers sometimes had difficulty identifying specifically what made an administrator so. As one teacher remarked, he easily recalled the *ineffective* principals and the reasons he had for feeling that way about them. He said he *knew* which ones he considered to be *effective*, but he had a harder time putting his finger on what it was that made them superior.

School as Workplace

All teachers alluded to the importance of the school as a workplace. Their feelings about their working environment were periodically revealed through comments made as an aside while discussing broader issues. One teacher remarked that the halls of one school "were always nicely decorated" [3,746], and she noted how she liked the fact that the principal had taken pictures of the graduating class to be mounted on the walls.

In expressing his frustration with the lack of goals and what he perceived to be the principal's inability to bring the staff together, another teacher proclaimed:

> It's really tough because it should be everybody working together, but because of the way that we've been given no direction, no clear direction of what we want our school to end up being -- this is what the goal is at the end -- it's just not working. It's too bad because we have the potential to be really good I'd say. It's a new school and it's a wonderful facility. It's just not going to happen right now I don't think. [4,125-131]

These latter statements imply that the theme of the school as a workplace holds a deeper meaning for teachers than simply the condition or appearance of the physical plant.

The school as workplace theme was most evident when teachers related stories connected with staff morale and climate. Some participants' views were cloaked in discussions about how administrators had implemented policies making schools prestigious places to work, or in their descriptions of staff members pulling together under unique circumstances. Respondents had a desire to be treated as professionals and to have their efforts recognized. The degree to which these needs were met influenced teachers' feelings about their workplace. Staffs were sometimes portrayed as a "family" or "community," and several participants described the role of social functions in bringing the teachers together as a group. Two teachers reinforced the notion that having a tightly-knit staff was beneficial. They stressed the importance of hiring practices designed to create teaching teams with a "certain chemistry" which helped make the school a better place to work.

Several teachers related accounts of times when staff members retreated to their classrooms and "closed the doors" because things weren't going well in the school. Each one described the negative impact this had on the overall working environment and on them personally. Two teachers explained that they had decided to seek transfers as a result of wanting to distance themselves from workplace factors. Concern was voiced by another teacher that if things weren't going well in other parts of the school, it would reflect on the whole staff. In his view, "Your reputation as a member of that staff rests on it" [4,584].

Professional Autonomy

The theme of professional autonomy kept recurring throughout the data, as most teachers wanted to be "left alone" to teach free of constraints, disruption, and outside influence. One participant referred to principals who "meddled" or "interfered" with the teaching process, whereas another, describing herself as the "expert" in her subject area, asserted that teachers already know how to teach, and that principals should build on that foundation.

Respondents wanted to have the freedom to act responsibly within what they believed was *their* domain. To one teacher, professional autonomy meant being able to order materials for his department without having his decisions questioned by the administration, for another it was not having to justify the use of construction paper in her classroom. Being afforded the latitude to define their own rules for classroom behaviour pleased three other teachers and enhanced their sense of independence.

Teachers' feelings extended beyond having a sense as though they were "in control" in their classrooms to include involvement in decisions affecting the day to day operation of the school as well. Their position became evident when they referred to "top-down" decisions made in some of their schools. Respondents' preference for inclusion in the decision-making process was clear, and several teachers described how principals attempted to accomplish this.

The Need to Feel Valued

A theme closely linked with that of professional autonomy and scattered throughout the data was the teachers' need for actions which would bolster their self-esteem. Their need to feel valued surfaced in a number of ways, but the majority of participants conveyed the sentiment while discussing how principals acknowledged their work. Teachers highlighted the importance of the "little things" that principals did to say "thank you" that conveyed a message that their work was important and that their efforts were appreciated. Implicit within their remarks was a sense that because "it doesn't take much" to say thank you, teachers felt frustrated that it didn't happen more often. Their comments betrayed the deep-seated nature of their need for recognition.

The possibility of professional growth, too, seemed a defining factor for teachers' convictions. When professional development opportunities were made accessible to them, or they received the principals' encouragement to pursue such activities, teachers were made to feel like that their work was meaningful.

Another way teachers addressed their need to be valued was when they discussed their overall involvement in what went on in the school. Teachers who had the impression that what they said "mattered" or "counted" generally felt as though they were valued.

More than one teacher voiced the opinion that they expected to have input into decisions which may affect them, and some participants revealed how their feelings of worth were buoyed when the principal made them feel as though they were "part of a team."

The Need to Feel Supported

All eight teachers in this study indicated a need to feel as though they were supported by their administration. The support motif wound throughout the interview data, and was manifest not only by the frequency of teacher references, but by the emotive chronicles of their experiences as well.

At those times when difficulties arose with either students or parents, teachers needed the reassurance of knowing they had the principals' unwavering support. "If there's been some confrontation with a parent and the principal has backed me up, then I know, I *know* I can count on him" [3,991-992]. Several teachers recalled administrators who had done this for them, even though the principals may have disagreed with them privately at a later time. Those teachers who recounted stories of times when the principal hadn't been supportive often felt let down: "I knew by that time that I couldn't count on him" [3,855]. Some even cast aspersion on former administrators: "He kept cutting the legs out from under her. Any kind of a dispute she had, any kind of discipline problems. . . . Nobody can function in that milieu" [2,231-233].

The way in which principals handled discipline matters became an almost universal barometer by which teachers gauged their support. This point notwithstanding, participants described *very few* administrator behaviours which could *not* be construed as indicators of the principals' backing. Respondents expected principals to empathize with their situation, and seemed to require continual reassurance that the administrator was still "on their side."

The theme became evident when one teacher mentioned she felt comfortable as a beginning teacher knowing that the principal was nearby and could be called-on for help.

A second teacher knew she could count on the principal's advocacy when he signalled to the staff that he was willing to stick "with something that was a little bit of a risk" [7,423-424]. Some teachers equated support in terms of financial backing provided for new program initiatives, whereas another explained that a principal taking steps to assist him with a particular instructional concern was a sign that he had his support. Throughout the interviews, respondents made it clear that the development of a trusting, professional relationship between teacher and principal was an essential prerequisite to feeling supported.

The considerable discussion which focussed on administrators being a visible presence in the school was a final way in which this theme emerged. Respondents needed to know they were not alone in their endeavours, and they wanted principals to engage in behaviours which contributed to the teachers' sense that "we're all in this together" [1,252-253]. For teachers who sometimes saw themselves as footsoldiers, the notion of "us and them" was perpetuated by principals who stayed "in their office" and failed to venture into "the trenches" to discover the type of issues teachers encountered daily.

In conclusion, the five themes presented above serve to extend our understanding of the meanings teachers attribute to the actions of the principal. The innumerable ways in which administrators have been portrayed speaks to the notion that the administration of schools can be a formidable task. The emphasis given the workplace, and the underlying themes that teachers need to feel valued, supported, and given a certain degree of autonomy over their work highlight the multi-faceted nature of "good teaching" as seen by teachers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore what actions of the principal teachers identify as being important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices. The findings revealed that teachers had manifold views about their administrators' behaviour, and the data presented in this chapter help to illustrate the wide range of participants' opinions as to those factors which influence teaching practices.

Respondents identified several preparatory steps taken by principals to lay a foundation for good teaching: setting and communicating goals for the school, articulating the "boundaries" within which teachers were expected to function, and working to bring teachers together as a cohesive unit. Participants spoke at length about those actions they saw having a more direct bearing on the teaching act. Principals who had high expectations, were visible in the school, and regularly monitored classrooms were discussed, and respondents also voiced opinions about the administrators' knowledge of the curriculum and approaches to teachers' professional development. Principals were often portrayed as fellow educators, and teachers underscored the importance of the administrator being a modeler and ally in the teaching process. Respondents discussed the principals' role in shaping the working climate and influencing morale by listening to teachers, recognizing their efforts, and establishing an atmosphere of trust. Teachers compared and contrasted various principals' orientations to administration, and numerous opinions were put forward concerning the influence of the administrators' personal characteristics on teaching practices.

The final section of this chapter was an examination of the five themes which emerged during the data analysis. A primary theme was that when describing the actions of principals, teachers had a tendency to use extreme examples to illustrate their views. A second theme highlighted the importance teachers attached to the school as a workplace. Issues of control were addressed in the third theme: professional autonomy. The need of teachers to feel valued and supported in their teaching endeavours were the topics of the final two themes.

Collectively, the teachers in this study described their experiences with over 40 principals. The richness and depth of the data presented in the categories and themes of this chapter offer greater insight into the "multiple realities" that exist in schools today.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate what school-based administrators do to uphold good teaching practices. More specifically, the research was focussed on obtaining greater insight into the meanings and values teachers associate with the principals' actions by addressing the question:

> **What actions of the principal do teachers identify as being important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices?**

In addition to this major query, four additional questions helped serve as a general guide for the development of the study:

1. What direct and indirect strategies does the principal use on a day to day basis?
2. How does the educational philosophy of the principal influence teaching practices in the school?
3. How do the principal's teaching expertise and knowledge of the curriculum influence supervisory practices in the school?
4. What actions of the principal do teachers identify as important in establishing trust with staff members in the school?

As the interviews unfolded, and insights into the topic were gained, these research questions underwent refinement and modification.

Research Method and Design

The objective of this study was to seek greater knowledge and understanding of the topic as it related to the participants rather than attempt to develop generalizations from the data. In keeping with the emergent nature of research design in naturalistic inquiry, the questions outlined above served as an initial guide for the research, but the specific design was allowed to evolve as the study progressed.

To carry out the research I developed a purposive sample of eight experienced teachers from diverse backgrounds who had each worked with more than one principal in their career. Once participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and consent forms were completed, the initial round of data collection began.

The data for this study were gathered by engaging in semi-structured interviews with the teachers over a 3 month period. To ensure the completeness and accuracy of the data collected, the participants' responses were tape-recorded and transcribed. I also took notes during the interviews which helped to further my grasp of the meanings of the spoken words when reviewing the tapes and transcripts later on. In order to obtain more dependable qualitative data, the guide questions were used to initiate our conversations, and teachers were encouraged to freely recount their stories in an informal dialogue. As a further check on the dependability of the data used, each participant was asked to verify the content of their interview transcript. They were also given the opportunity to make any additions or deletions that they thought were necessary, and follow-up interviews were conducted in order to deepen the data.

In keeping with the emergent design of the study, the analysis of the data began during the collection phase. Once all the verified transcripts had been collected, the interview data were subjected to numerous re-readings to enhance my understanding of the teachers' responses. I then put labels in the margins of the master transcripts which were used to sort the data within the categories. Further analysis of the original transcripts revealed a number of identifiable themes embedded in the data. As the categories and themes emerged, they were shared with the respondents and other teachers to verify their credibility and to further enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Finally, the patterns that emerged from the data provided the framework for the presentation of the categories and themes. The findings were presented using "thick description" to help preserve the richness of the teachers' stories, and to be true to the interpretive research paradigm.

Major Findings

Categories. When asked to identify those principals' actions they saw as important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices, respondents spoke at length about their views on the daily dynamics of school life. The study revealed the multiplicity of meanings and values participants held about their administrators' activities, and from teachers' perspectives it illustrated the broad spectrum of opinions as to which factors influence instructional practices in schools.

Respondents described principals' actions which tended to fall within the two generally accepted dimensions of leadership behaviour (i.e., the task dimension and the human dimension). However, certain factors were discussed which suggested activities more closely resembling the cultural, symbolic, and educational forces of leadership which have become more prevalent in recent literature (Sergiovanni, 1984, 1991).

Participants identified a number of administrator actions which they felt established the necessary prerequisites for good teaching. These activities provided a footing upon which effective instructional practices could be built. Teachers discussed the importance of principals providing a sense of direction for the school by clearly articulating a vision or set of goals that others could work toward. Similarly, teachers wanted to know where principals were "coming from" in terms of their expectations, so that they could gauge their own behaviours within the established guidelines -- something one respondent characterized as "knowing the rules." Participants also highlighted the need for teachers to work together as a cohesive team in order to achieve excellence in schooling. Teachers related a multitude of ways in which principals strove to "bring them together," but the administrators' role in team-building was not always clearly discernible.

In addition to principals establishing certain background conditions that assisted the teaching act, participants in this study described those activities which in their view more directly impacted instructional practices. Respondents explained how "effective" principals had high expectations of teachers, and they described how that message was continually conveyed to staff members. Teachers had varying opinions of the influence the principals' curricular knowledge had on their teaching, and they discussed numerous ways that principals monitored and evaluated instructional practices. All respondents seemed to place higher value on informal methods of supervision rather than the formal evaluation requirements of district office personnel. Two additional practices were identified as significant influences on teaching as well. Teachers wanted principals to maintain a high profile in the school by visiting classrooms and "being visible" in the halls. Such behaviour was seen as having a two-fold purpose: it gave value to the work teachers were doing in the classrooms, and it also sent the message that teachers and principal were all "in it together." The second action related to improving instruction through involvement in professional development activities, and many respondents saw the principal playing a key role in encouraging teachers to grow professionally.

Throughout the interviews participants also discussed actions of the principal which had an impact on them as individuals as opposed to influencing teaching practices directly. Most teachers felt that it was important for the administrators to lead by example and to demonstrate that they were hard workers. Some respondents felt that principals with partial teaching assignments in addition to their administrative duties were likely to be more "in touch" with teachers' concerns about issues such as discipline. This last point draws attention to a key finding of the study, that teachers very much wanted the principal to be their ally in their educational endeavours.

Related to the findings above were the respondents' conversations centring on the principals' role in shaping the working climate in the school. Teachers strongly emphasized the value they attached to recognition of their efforts and being given the opportunity to have input into decisions which affected them. They offered their views on the ways administrators had tackled morale issues in the past, and they spoke at length about the impact principals' actions or inactions had upon their feelings of trust and respect.

Respondents identified the principals' orientation to administration as a key factor in determining how they chose to ensure that good teaching was occurring in their schools. Similarly, the principals' personal and professional characteristics were also highlighted by teachers as important determinants of how principals acted. The *way* in which principals behaved often seemed more significant to teachers than *what* it was that principals actually did. Teachers voiced many opinions about the different leadership styles of their various principals, but no one pattern of behaviour emerged as a "favourite." The respondents' chief concern seemed to be that their principals act consistently and predictably. Above all, teachers wanted to be treated in a professional manner, and most respondents expressed a desire that principals be "approachable" so that they would feel comfortable going to them with questions or concerns.

In summary, the teachers identified many actions of the principal which they felt influenced instructional practices in the school. Some of these activities were directly connected with the teaching act in terms of ensuring that lesson delivery was satisfactory. However, many of the actions described by respondents had seemingly remote connections with teaching itself. The participants' responses showed that their conceptions of "school" and "teaching" meant more to them than what occurred strictly within the walls of the classroom. Certain conditions were seen as being conducive to pedagogical excellence, and the principal was identified as having a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining an environment within the school which permitted good teaching to transpire.

Themes. The rigorous content analysis revealed five themes embedded within the data. These themes provided further insight into the meanings and values teachers associated with principals' actions.

Respondents had a tendency to characterize their experiences with different principals using extreme examples to illustrate their views. They discussed the "Heros and Villains" of their career and related the lasting impact that each had had upon them.

The school held special significance for teachers as a place of work, and the values they associated with their workplace were woven throughout the interview transcripts. This theme highlighted teachers' views about the impact of working environment factors on instructional practices.

Most teachers expressed a desire to be "left alone" in their teaching, and to be allowed the freedom to act independently. They wanted to be able to make their own decisions about things which affected them, and they often saw themselves as the "experts" in their field. The theme "Professional Autonomy" addressed these issues.

The fourth theme was also scattered throughout the data and spoke to the teachers' need to feel valued. Teachers had a strong desire to be acknowledged for their efforts, and they wanted to have a sense that what they were doing was important and meaningful. Respondents who felt that their opinions "mattered" or "counted" had a greater sense of involvement in school, and thus felt more valued as well.

A final over-arching theme which emerged was the teachers' need to feel supported. This theme was manifest in many ways, but most commonly it arose when teachers discussed how principals dealt with student discipline. Teachers wanted administrators to "back them up" and give them the reassurance that they could be counted upon. Principals being visible was a further way that teachers sensed they had support.

To conclude, the summary of the categories and themes presented above illustrates the diversity of views expressed by the eight teachers in this study. Research has led to many conceptions of what principals should do to encourage good teaching, but teachers have distinct views as to which of the principals' actions are important in this regard. The findings of this study provide a glimpse into teachers' perspectives on this topic.

Reflections on the Literature

With a few exceptions, the findings of this thesis appear to be consistent with many of the views tendered in the academic literature. Contemporary authors have proposed many theories about the work of principals, and recent descriptive studies have enhanced our understandings of the role. Reflecting on this body of writing in light of the opinions expressed by the eight teachers involved in this study serves to further elucidate the varied meanings and subtle nuances of principals' behaviour.

The descriptive and theoretical literature offers many lists of behaviours that "effective" or "successful" administrators use in their efforts to promote instructional improvement. Similarly, the participants in this study discussed a multitude of principal actions which they believed encouraged good teaching. These findings support the general assertion that proficient instructional leaders employ a variety of different strategies to foster effective teaching practices (Duke, 1987; Dwyer, 1984; Johnson, 1989; McEvoy, 1987; Russell et al., 1985; Weber, 1987). Further to this, the spectrum of views expressed by the respondents highlighted the varied impact of principals' actions from teachers' perspectives. These comments are consistent with the range of teachers' descriptions of leadership styles as reported by Keefe et al. (1983), Leithwood (1992), and Smith and Andrews (1989).

There are several theoretical frameworks for studying leadership styles in the current literature (Owens, 1991), and the interview data suggest that more than one may apply at any given time. As a rule, the teachers' responses were characteristic of the two-dimensional leadership theory which over time has become well established in the literature (Owens, 1991, pp. 136-142). More specifically, the respondents, like those in Blase's (1987a, 1987b) study, spoke of administrator behaviours that had a direct bearing on their instructional practices and their feelings about their work. By the same token, the teachers' comments were illustrative of the leadership styles and forces described by other authors as well. The "pep-talks and rallies" used to inspire teachers to greater levels of effectiveness conveyed the importance that "program" and "student achievement" (Leithwood et al., 1990) held for one principal. Another administrator's efforts to have PD day decorations and snacks that matched the school colours, and his attendance at special events "as principal and leader of the school," were representative of the cultural and symbolic forces of leadership discussed by Sergiovanni (1984, 1991). Although isolated here, the principals' actions described by respondents tended to simultaneously fall under several categories of leadership. This was the case throughout the data, a finding supportive of Saphier and King's (1985) contention that the skills for all the leadership forces are shown through the same activities. The results were also supportive of Sergiovanni's (1991) view that it's the *meanings* that others attribute to the principals' actions and behaviours (rather than the actions and behaviours themselves) which point to a more precise understanding of leadership.

As a whole, the teachers in this study did not seem to favour one particular principal style over another. Similar to the research of Hall et al. (1984), the teachers revealed that a number of administrator styles may be regarded as "effective" under different circumstances. This notwithstanding, there were interesting parallels between the respondents' opinions and the views of "initiators, managers, and responders" as reported by Hall and his colleagues. One teacher spoke highly of an initiator type principal, but drew attention to the stresses of being continually "pushed" to grow professionally. Another discussed the drawbacks of having an administrator characterized as a "human relations operator" who "didn't deal with the issues, but . . . made people feel good." Reaction toward principals who could be labelled "managers" was mixed, yet like the 1984 study, there was an appreciation for the way schools ran smoothly under their leadership.

It is important to note that by and large, the labels which permeate the professional literature did not seem to be part of the vocabulary of the teachers involved in this study. Individuals voiced opinions on their various principals' approaches to leadership, and although the stories could often be "slotted" into the different theoretical constructs, the respondents themselves did not generally speak in these terms.

The findings of this thesis broadly correspond with the literature that states that one of the principal's main tasks is to create an environment which will allow teachers to reach their maximum effectiveness (Morris et al., 1984; Pfeifer, 1986; Valentine & Bowman, 1991). The respondents' extended narratives were also consistent with the recurring observation (Bird & Little, 1985; Dwyer, 1984; Haughey & McElwain, 1992; McEvoy, 1987) that it is day-to-day routines which foster those conditions for improved teaching. With respect to the specific actions of administrators in their instructional leadership role, the teachers who participated in this research seemed to concur with a number of the views reported by Smith and Andrews (1989). Although individual respondents ascribed varying levels of emphasis to each of the areas outlined in the publication, there was a striking similarity in many of the administrator activities described.

Like the teachers in the Smith and Andrews research, most respondents saw the principal as an important catalyst for growth by making teachers aware of PD opportunities. This point appears to conflict with Barth's (1990) assertion that principals have little effect on teacher growth. The teachers' preoccupation with the incessant demands of their classrooms led some respondents to feel that the thrust for professional development *had* "to come from the principal." Smith and Andrews (1989) also explained that principals described as strong resource providers view it as their responsibility to acquire whatever support is necessary to help achieve academic goals. The study participants, however, did not dwell on this aspect of the principals' job, and relatively few remarks were made concerning budgetary support for programs and initiatives.

Some teachers related how principals had helped them to improve their instructional practices by giving them encouragement and guidance, and by urging them to experiment with alternate teaching strategies. In this sense, principals were acting as an "instructional resource" as described by Smith and Andrews. When explaining how their administrators had given them assistance, though, the participants usually reflected on their first or early years of teaching. Sergiovanni (1991) offered a possible explanation for this observation. In his discussion of the educational force of leadership, he noted that it may be manifest in two forms: (a) the principal acting as a strong instructional leader, or (b) the principal acting as a knowledgeable colleague or leader of leaders (pp. 102-103). He suggested that the former mode of behaviour was more "appropriate for new teachers, teachers with less than fully developed competencies, or teachers with doubtful commitment. The second . . . [was] appropriate for more mature, competent, and committed teachers" (p. 103). These points and the fact that the respondents in the study were all experienced teachers may explain why they referred to their early years when discussing the principals' actions as an instructional leader. It may also account for some of the differences in their views with respect to the connection between the principals' curricular knowledge and teaching practices. Some participants described themselves as the instructional "experts" and saw the administrators' curricular knowledge playing a minor role in their teaching, whereas other teachers were of the opinion that certain principals "could call you on anything." Sergiovanni suggested that a principal's ultimate objective should be to become a leader of leaders, and the respondents' stories seem to exemplify this evolutionary process.

The Smith and Andrews (1989) study also disclosed that teachers accredited strong principals with having a distinct vision for the school, having high performance expectations of teachers, modelling performance standards through their own behaviour, encouraging innovation in the classroom, and maintaining a high degree of professionalism in matters of instructional supervision. Each of these findings have been strongly supported by the interview data.

The teachers in this study felt it very important that principals be "visible" in the school. As did Smith and Andrews' teachers, respondents explained that such behaviour helped administrators be "more aware" of what teaching practices were in their building, as well as it being another way of showing support for the staff and boosting their accountability. These findings are also in keeping with the discussions in the literature concerning the value of principals "wandering around" as a means of keeping a thumb on the pulse of the school (Frase & Melton, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1991).

The literature specifically pertaining to the supervision of instruction delineates key skills and approaches for principals to use (Oliva, 1989; Wiles & Bondi, 1986). However, for the most part, respondents saw supervision and evaluation as small components of the overall strategy employed by administrators to promote teaching excellence. Unlike Pavan and Reid's (1991) research in which teachers rated supervising and evaluating instruction the highest, the teachers in this study subordinated the value of formal evaluation procedures in favour of less formal "drop-in" visits and other similar low-key approaches to monitoring what was happening in classrooms. The respondents tended not to see supervision as an isolated task, and many of the principals' actions they identified were incorporated in Oliva's (1989) description of the process. In this sense, the teachers' view of supervision was more in line with Glickman's (1990) glue metaphor, which suggested that when doing its work, supervision is generally taken for granted.

The teachers' opinions of supervision and evaluation ranged from indifference to rage. Their characterization of the process as low in value but as something that must necessarily be endured implies that Blumberg's (1980) description of the relationship between teacher and supervisor as a "cold war" can be an accurate one. Further to this, remarks that evaluation makes certain teachers "bristle" suggests that in some cases the cold war can become decidedly warm. These findings present an interesting contrast to the principals' views reported by McElwain (1989) in which administrators saw their supervisory relationships with teachers as being positive other than in a few exceptional cases.

The opinions expressed by the respondents in this study more closely mirrored the findings of Cole's (1990) investigation of teacher-principal relationships. The participants addressed each of the major categories discussed by the teachers in the Cole study, although the data concerning the principals' attitude towards students were remarkably silent. Teachers did mention students from time to time, but for the most part they tended to be an adjunct to the main conversation.

Many of the trust defining factors proffered by Duke and Stiggins (1986) were addressed by the eight teachers in this study. However, just as the literature is not terribly forthcoming with explanations as to how trust is established, respondents also wrestled with the concept when attempting to speak of it directly. Throughout the interviews, teachers' conversations gravitated away from trust toward descriptions of behaviours which augmented or attenuated their respect for the principal. The notion was evident in the way teachers spoke of an environment of trust and respect, but they they often had a difficult time articulating its creation.

When discussing what principals did to ensure that good teaching was occurring in their schools, time and again, the respondents described their administrators' personal characteristics. There was an ambiguous separation between personal and professional qualities, and teachers often didn't distinguish between the two. The tightly interwoven personal and professional dimensions described by teachers were consistent with the findings reported by Keefe and his colleagues (1983), and supported Weber's (1987) assertion that administrators' decision-making processes and style of leadership are influenced by their personal characteristics.

The literature denotes a number of school-related factors which have a bearing on teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Frase & Sorenson, 1992; Louis & Smith, 1990). Participants in this study generally felt less satisfied with their work when they viewed the principal as being unprofessional or lacking in any of a number of instructional leadership areas. The teachers' stories revealed how their feelings toward their work were shaped by their perceptions of being supported, listened to, recognized for their efforts, and being treated professionally. Having a degree of professional autonomy and certain administrator personality factors were also considered significant. All these findings are consistent with the literature which has identified a strong link between the principals' leadership and teachers' feelings of satisfaction with their jobs (Darling-Hammond, 1984; Louis & Smith, 1990; Mitchell & Willower, 1992; Smith & Andrews, 1989). In addition, the extensive list of elements affecting job satisfaction supports Kottkamp's (1990) observation that it is difficult to develop an all-encompassing theory to explain the correlation between the factors.

In conclusion, the literature and the findings of this thesis reveal numerous perspectives of the administrators' role in today's schools. The more dated works have assigned a greater stature to principals as instructional leaders than did certain teachers in this study. Among the eight respondents, there was considerable variation in the amount of responsibility for instructional matters attributed to the principal. Several teachers alluded to an increased sharing of leadership in educational decision-making along the lines of Sergiovanni's (1991) discussion of leadership density and Barth's (1990) conception of the school as a community of learners. Some respondents, on the other hand, held a more traditional view of the administrator as the pre-eminent force behind instructional improvement. The range of views expressed by teachers suggests the notion that the principalship is in a state of flux, and speaks to a need for resilient leadership to cope in an environment of diverse opinions.

Personal Reflections

While conducting this research there were numerous times that the respondents expressed opinions with which I could identify as a teacher. By the same token, there were several occasions when my convictions were challenged by the teachers' thought-provoking viewpoints. As I gathered and analyzed the interview data and began the process of writing the thesis, I kept an on-going record of my reflections in a journal. These musings and emerging sparks of insight have formed the basis of the section which follows.

What became most immediately obvious from the accumulating data was the range of views teachers held about principals and their actions. The distinct opinions about the principals' role in school illustrated the varied meanings teachers attached to the position.

Similarly, the participants' responses highlighted considerable variation in their views of the effects that certain administrator behaviours had on teaching practices. The significance of these differences should not be quickly dismissed. Discussions in the literature and elsewhere frequently refer to "the teachers' view" or, like this study, pose the question "what do teachers think?" There is a danger that such statements and queries may oversimplify the issue of what teachers' opinions are. As an exploratory work, this investigation sought to contribute to the knowledge of administrators' practices from teachers' perspectives. The variety of opinions expressed by the eight teachers in the study provides just a sample of the many conceptions of what principals do. Clearly one needs to avoid making too broad a generalization about what teachers think on these matters.

The findings of this study suggest that principals must be able to "get the most" out of each teacher on staff. If administrators are to act as a facilitators to help individual teachers reach their full potential, they must be sensitive to their individual needs. Implicit within this pronouncement is the assumption that the principal is able to determine what those requirements are, and is able to provide the different forms of support needed for teachers' activities. The data clearly speak to the importance of principals being able to "read" people to ascertain their views, opinions, and needs -- a task made more challenging by the fact that so many views exist among the teaching body.

Along similar lines, it is important for the principal and the teacher to be communicating in the same "language." Teachers' views of pedagogy are influenced by their personal abilities and work habits, and their opinions of the principals' actions are similarly affected. The suggestion of a need for parity between teachers' and administrators' work habits or work ethic is supported by the findings of this research. The teachers in the study almost exclusively discussed principals who were successful at inspiring others to work hard, or they spoke about those principals whom they thought were operating below their view of an acceptable performance standard. The gap between administrator and teacher was perceived wider when there wasn't a meshing of values, and some respondents spoke openly of getting away from the "us and them" conception of the relationship with the principal. The implied desire that the principal be as "good" as the teacher may be an unrealistic expectation in a setting with such a vast array of talents, abilities, and values.

Further to the discussion above, the prominent role played by perception and values in the schools warrants closer examination. Principals' personal orientations to administration are powerful determinants of the actions they choose to employ. However, teachers' perceptions of those actions, based on their own views about how administration should be carried out, may result in a completely different picture. What some view as differences in leadership styles may give rise to questions of competence or incompetence with others. For example, a principal believing he is acting in a participatory manner by delegating responsibilities may be viewed by teachers as shirking his obligations if not done correctly. Principals must consider the message that their actions are sending in addition to the action itself, and as discussed earlier, they should attempt to "read" the staff by sounding them out well so that misconceptions are reduced.

Schools can be extremely demanding environments in which to work, and teachers may be the most difficult audience in front of which principals must play. The very nature of the teachers' job dictates that they are continually observing, assessing, and evaluating the performance of others, and it stands to reason that from time to time they are likely to cast a critical eye upon the work of their administrators. Is it unrealistic to expect principals to be "perfect" all the time? Probably, but the nature of the profession seems to demand nothing less. Teachers constantly push their students to achieve to the best of their ability, and their tolerance is low for what they judge to be sub-standard work around them. It seems that principals must *earn* the right to have high expectations of their staff. As Petrie (1991) pointed out, teachers intuitively know when their administrators are being ineffective, and their "antennae" are continually attuned to lack-lustre performance. In the same way effective principals are unrelenting in their pursuit of instructional improvement, teachers seem to be equally demanding of the principals' leadership. They evaluate principals by *everything* they do. *Every* action counts. Teachers expect principals to be experts in school administration, and they measure their performance using very high standards. Teachers have a difficult time accepting administrators who are perceived as not meeting their performance criteria, and many of them believe that when the principal does not perform well it also reflects on the staff. The principals' position of authority over teachers is an added dimension which can exacerbate their frustration.

The teachers in this study spoke often about the principal "being there" to support them in what they were doing. One got a sense that in those times when teachers thought they didn't have the principals' support they felt alone or abandoned and in need of an advocate. Despite their desire for independence and professional autonomy, teachers still wanted the reassurance of having the principal there to "back them up." This has the potential of placing administrators in a very awkward position. On the one hand they are expected to protect the teacher, yet this has to be balanced with an over-riding concern for the students' best interests.

There was considerable evidence in the data speaking to the importance of the teachers' desire to feel as though they were "in control." Remarks such as "he ran the school like it was his . . ." and discussions centring on issues of professional autonomy emphasized this sentiment. The concept also made itself apparent when teachers talked about their need for direction and feeling appreciated for the work they were doing. When they developed a sense that their efforts had little significance and they weren't sure where they were "going," their ability to predict outcomes was hampered. A stable, predictable environment in which their work had meaning, enhanced teachers' feelings of control over what they were doing.

The manner in which teachers discussed how principals established certain enabling conditions for teaching leads one to wonder about how much influence they really have on instructional practices. In many cases, teachers seemed to put greater stock in the staff as a unit having greater influence, and the principal was seen as an extension of the staff -- a coordinator or facilitator who worked to shape the conditions which were needed for good teaching. The secondary activities such as being visible in the halls had meanings which extended beyond the actions. Teachers saw these activities as being important for *assisting* good teaching, whereas supervisory and evaluative activities which directly impacted teaching practices held less importance for them as experienced teachers. These points drew attention to the distinction respondents made between activities which *established* good teaching, and those which *sustained* good teaching.

The frequency with which teachers mentioned the principals' personality as a factor in determining what happens in school was cause for a final reflection. It raises a question of what can be done about something over which principals have no control. If teachers are correct in their assertion that successful principals need to possess a certain personality type, one wonders about a system which apparently permits individuals who some perceive as unfit for administration to attain their leadership positions. It seems there is no easy answer to this dilemma except to postulate that if school boards rigorously adhere to a policy of hiring or promoting only those individuals with proven talents or abilities, the possibility of this occurring is reduced.

In conclusion, the principalship certainly requires a tremendous amount of energy and a need to be highly organized. As in any profession, the people who work in schools bring a kaleidoscope of values with them, and somehow these values have to combine harmoniously in order for the school to run smoothly. Principals, by virtue of their position in schools, have an important part to play in ensuring the success of this orchestration.

Implications for Practice

The descriptive data provided by the respondents in this study lead to a number of implications for administrative practice.

The range of views presented in the study highlighted the complexity of contemporary school administration. The findings spoke to a need for prospective principals to become familiar with the many facets of educational leadership in order to be better equipped to address the issues with which they will be faced. The implication that those aspiring to leadership positions would increasingly benefit from post-graduate study in the field of educational administration arises from this assertion.

With respect to the university preparation of school-based administrators, the research supported the expansion of programs which offer students the freedom to develop and refine a broad range of competencies. The importance of principals having an extensive repertoire of leadership skills upon which to call was emphasized in the interview data. In addition to courses which provide a theoretical background to educational administration, courses involving experiential learning give students the opportunity to hone many of the skills the study participants expected their principals to have. Similarly, courses with field-based components which expose students to a variety of administrative styles in different settings help to better prepare them for their anticipated leadership roles. Consideration should be given to assigning greater emphasis to these aspects of principals' training.

For those principals who have completed graduate work in educational administration, or have read articles in the professional literature, there are implications for the way in which change initiatives are implemented in schools. The findings revealed important differences between the language of teachers and that used by many writers. Principals should be cautioned not to assume that teachers are familiar with the terminology of the literature. They may not understand the principals' intentions if they haven't been made aware of what is being attempted and the reasons behind the principals' decisions. In order to garner teachers' support for new ideas, administrators may have to devote additional time to "educating" them about the theories behind innovative concepts.

Teachers used to the "traditional" way of doing things may be more likely to support initiatives if they understand the rationale behind them.

A further implication arising from the data is that principals must be fully aware of the potential effects their actions or inactions can have on teaching practices in the school. This thesis provided a "voice" for those teachers who were willing to express their opinions, and as such it offers readers an opportunity for insight into the meanings and values teachers hold for the principals' activities. Those presently in (or aspiring to hold) administrative positions in schools may consider using the findings of the study as a reference for learning more about the opinions teachers have concerning the principals' impact on teaching. Armed with this knowledge, they may then reflect upon their own perspectives on school administration with a view towards becoming more informed practitioners.

The research findings reinforced the need for awareness of the different priorities that exist between principals and classroom teachers. The range of opinions expressed by the respondents in the study emphasizes the importance of administrators being able to interpret teachers' views if misconceptions are to be avoided. Principals must not assume that they know what teachers think. They must make a concerted effort to develop and maintain an atmosphere of open and honest communication that will help both parties understand the other's intentions.

The teachers' stories illustrated that for them, "little things" have significant value in determining the conditions under which they must work. Principals should consider adopting a stance which allows them to engage in on-going reflection about their practices so that they remain in touch with the meanings teachers associate with administrators' actions.

A final implication arising from this research concerns the recruitment and hiring of school-based administrators. The teachers in this study gave considerable weight to principals who were hard workers with high expectations, who possessed extraordinary interpersonal skills, and who could be counted upon to do "the right thing." Consideration should be given to the selection of principals with a broad base of training and/or experience in educational administration, a proven record of exemplary performance as an educator, and exceptional abilities in interpersonal relations.

Implications for Future Research

The objective of this study was to explore what actions of the principal teachers identify as important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices. In conjunction with the findings of the thesis, the delimitations placed on the investigation suggest a number of avenues for future research.

As this exploration involved opinions from only a narrow slice of the teaching body, replication of the study, particularly in light of the relative scarcity of such research, would be valuable in uncovering further data on the "multiple realities" prevailing in Alberta schools.

The participants in this study came from a variety of teaching backgrounds. Additional descriptive studies using different delimitations may therefore be worthwhile. Apart from the merits of contributing to the existing knowledge base, such research could provide useful data for comparison with the findings reported in this thesis. Consideration should be given to investigating teachers' views using restrictions such as: school size (number of administrators), grade levels taught, years of teaching experience, or setting (rural or urban).

Teachers are only one group with a vested interest in what principals do to influence their instructional practices. Studies which investigate the views of other significant stakeholders in the process deserve consideration as well. Research from the perspectives of students, parents, district-level administrators, or principals would provide the data base necessary for comparison with these findings.

Finally, the interviews highlighted a number of issues which themselves are worthy of further investigation. The nature of teaching and school administration is such that the possibilities are almost limitless. The principals' role in shaping the school climate, their involvement in teachers' professional development, and factors which influenced teachers' job satisfaction were all significant components of this study and offer potential for further research.

Conclusion

The data provided by the eight teachers in this study illustrated many views of the principals' leadership and impact on teaching. Their candid responses offer readers the opportunity to acquire greater insight into teachers' perspectives on what school-based administrators do to foster instructional excellence. The stories highlight the effect of principals' actions on individuals as well as teaching practices, and reinforce the notion that school administration has both human and technical dimensions. The diversity of teachers' opinions amplify the demanding nature of the principalship, and speak to a need for tremendous commitment from those aspiring to such positions.

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Appendix A

Correspondence

Richard Payne
#7-167A, Education North
University of Alberta

April 26, 1992

Dear ____________,

Thank you for assisting me in my research by agreeing to participate in an interview.

As I discussed with you when we spoke earlier, the focus of the study is an examination of what school-based administrators do to sustain good teaching practices. More specifically, I am interested in finding out what actions of the principal teachers identify as being important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices.

I hope that the results of this study will be of interest to teachers and practicing or aspiring school administrators, as well as to instructors of graduate-level educational administration courses. The results may provide insights into the teacher-administrator interactions that take place on a daily basis. Consequently, administrators may be more effective in establishing and maintaining good teaching practices if they are more cognizant of teachers' views about principals' actions in these areas.

The chief method of data collection for this study will be through tape-recorded interviews such as the one you have agreed to take part in. The interview will be semi-structured, and will focus on the topic I have outlined above. I anticipate that no more than an hour will be required for our initial meeting. Once the interview has been transcribed, I will share it with you so that any corrections, additions, or deletions can be made as necessary. After I have done a preliminary analysis of the interview data, I will discuss with you the categories and themes that have emerged in order to establish their credibility.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. Although quotations from the interviews may be used in the thesis, the sources will not be identified. Names and locations will not be used in the final document -- pseudonyms will be used instead.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and that you have the right to opt out at any time. If you would like further clarification of any aspect of this research study or your interview, please contact me at the above address.

Once you have read this letter, please complete the form below to indicate that you agree to participate in this study and return it to me as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Richard

I, ______________________________ , have read the above information and do hereby agree to participate in the research study: *Teachers' Views of Principals' Actions*. I realize my participation is completely voluntary and that I have the right to opt out of the study at any time.

____
signature

____
date

Richard Payne
#7-167A Education North
University of Alberta

July 21, 1992

Dear Participant:

Hello again. I hope you have had an enjoyable summer thus far and are taking full advantage of your well-deserved break. My time at the university will soon be winding down, and I am looking forward to the challenges of a new teaching assignment this upcoming year.

As promised when we last met, I am now supplying you with some feedback on my research. I have completed the preliminary analysis of the data and will soon be preparing the final document. Rather than giving you the entire data-analysis chapter, I have prepared a four-page summary for you to examine If you would like to read the detailed analysis (~70 pgs), it will certainly be made available. [Pseudonyms have been used throughout the draft report, and any specific details of events or circumstances which might have disclosed people's identity have been left out.]

In order to help promote the trustworthiness of the study, would you please take a few moments to read the attached summary of the data analysis and provide me with your assessment? One or two brief comments are all that's required unless you prefer to give a more detailed response. **In particular, I am interested in knowing if you think the findings seem credible (believable) from a teacher's perspective. I would also like to know if you think anything should be added to, or deleted from, the final report.** Please complete the blue response sheet enclosed and return it so that I receive it by August 7, 1992. This will allow me time to make any necessary revisions to the final document. If I haven't heard from you by this date, I will assume that there are no serious concerns with the information that is presented.

Once again, thank-you for your time and patience. The experiences you have shared have been invaluable in helping to develop a greater understanding of the diversity of views that teachers hold on this topic. If you have any questions about the research, please don't hesitate to contact me at _ _ _-_ _ _ _ (home).

Sincerely,

Encl.

Participant #______

RESPONSE SHEET

Please complete the response sheet below and return it in the enclosed envelope so that I receive it by August 7, 1992. This will allow me time to make any necessary revisions to the final document. If I haven't heard from you by this date, I will assume that you have no serious concerns with the information that is presented. Thanks.

From a teachers' perspective, do the findings seem credible (believable)?

Should anything be added to the final report? Deleted?

Comments:____

____

____

____

____.

Appendix B

Transcript Excerpts

Excerpt #4.1,16-86

Q: Now the different schools you've been in, you've worked with a number of different principals. What I'd like you to do is describe some of the things that you've seen them doing to establish and maintain good teaching practices in the school.

A: I've worked with I guess six different principals, and probably the ones that I would consider the most effective -- there's only been probably two of the six who I would consider really effective -- are the ones who have a really clear idea of where they want the schools to go, or what they want out of their schools, and communicate that to their staff. So I would say that that would be the biggest thing is that the principals had an idea of what they wanted. They had a position where they were in charge of this business and they knew what they wanted out of their business and they communicated that to you, and said you know you're part of this business and we need your support and your help to make it work, and the most effective principal I've had did that very very well. His first staff meeting as new principal to the school was very much "Let's understand that this is, you know, a business and that we're all working together as a team, and this is what *I* would like to see as a leader of the ship, and these are everyone's roles within that." He was very effective, very effective.

Q: Let's stick with him for a moment. What other types of specific things did he do?

A: He let me know that I was in charge of the department, but he also let me know that he would not interfere, but he would kind of supervise. So it wasn't, I've been in, and I have been in situations since, where you're in charge of the department, but you know you can do anything you want because no one's ever going to come and take a look at what you're doing. Whereas he made it really clear that I was in charge, but that he was going to also be around and be noticing and he was really good that way. He would come and show a real interest in what was going on and make suggestions or ask why we're doing something because it was important for him that I was successful. If I was successful then he would be viewed as successful. He made sure he followed up on the whole idea of I was in charge but also be aware that he was in charge of me. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?

Q: Um hum. How did that compare with some of the other principals that you've been with?

A: The majority of the rest, I was in charge, and as long as nothing negative happened, you know, so that poop would come down on their heads so to speak, it was like I was an entity unto my own, and as long as things functioned well, and there was no trouble, then it *must* have been going well. But you know they never actively came out and took a look and said, "Gee that looks really good." Or, "That's a great idea" or things like that. It was just: "How's it going? OK. That's fine. It must be going well -- there's no problems. We're not getting kids [in the office]." It seemed like as long as you didn't bring grief to them you had to be doing a good job. So there was never ever checking, they were never coming to see. The kids were having a good time as long as they weren't sitting in the office -- it had to have been a good thing.

Q: Do you think that influenced your teaching practices?

A: I think so. Just that [principal X] was going to come in and take a look and he had a [similar] background himself, so I respected that because I knew that things that I was doing he would look at with more of a critical eye and be able to say, "Hey that's really good." It kept me working hard knowing that there was this fellow who gave me the responsibility but also was going to check up and make sure I was doing it. It wasn't like there was a big stick over my head that if you didn't do a good job you were fired, it was just he took pride in having a good place and it kind of rubbed off on you. He worked really hard to make his school a good thing, and he made you do that as well, or that's what he did for me. You worked really hard because he was really working hard to hold up his end so you wanted to hold up yours as well. He was very effective, very effective. Some people didn't like that, but I found it really good.

Excerpt #7.1,196-330

A: . . . he *never ever* made us feel like we weren't part of the team. I think I'm a very good teacher and I'm also a very active person in school, he will tell me "You drive me crazy," but he will support everything I do. He has a great deal of trust with people he has brought on-line. He's, I would say, ultimately always fair. He tends to be fairly uh, he likes to follow channels and that's basically what he makes clear is that you go through your department head and then to your vice-principal and then to him. He's first and foremost very professional. You can rely on him. He's a very politically wise person and you can rely on him to give you a fairly honest and fair answer when you have an issue. He tends to back teachers before kids when issues arise, but he's *always* a student's advocate. He always will, to the parents he will say "Let me check that with the teachers," but then he will say to the teachers "I want to know exactly what happened." He has relatively high expectations in terms of curriculum. There's always a sense that he would come out and check your lesson plans.

Q: Does he do that?

A: No, that's what I was going to say. At the same time he doesn't. He does that *definitely* with new teachers. I have still not been evaluated.

Q: Ever?

A: Ever.

Q: In how many years?

A: Nine years. And I could be burning books in the classroom and they would never know. I think he thinks that because I teach diploma exam courses -- my kids always do above the provincial average. Nobody ever complains. My department head has evaluated me, and they're not allowed to do formal written evaluations, but my department head would be a real advocate for me. The plan was that each vice-principal would have departments to evaluate. Because they have been so busy getting this school on-line they haven't done it. They haven't reached everybody, and so [the principal] has decided to take that on. I know that he is evaluating people, at this time, and I am certain in June he will evaluate me, and I will have to show him lesson plans and unit plans and so on.

Q: If we can just go back to a couple of the things that you just mentioned. You said he was very professional. What are the types of things that he does, or what is it about him that makes you describe him that way?

A: He would never say something about a fellow teacher that he wouldn't say directly to you. And if he was going to say something he would go through the proper channels and bring you in on it. He would not allow *you* to come in and say, "Lisa's doing this," without Lisa hearing about it fairly quickly, and he's not a gossip. He doesn't have an "old boys' club." I'm not so naïve as to think that administrators don't sit and discuss some of the things we do, but you would never know that in terms of his behaviour or how he treats each of us.

He's very good. . . . He tends to *guide*, helps you do things by discovery, but he generally tends to lead you to a place where he wants you to be. Unfortunately he has a great sense of humour but the kids never see it. In fact the kids always make a joke that he's just a tape-recorded voice. He has some real people talents but I don't think the kids see them very much. He's very much an administrator. And while I'd say he's a student advocate, he doesn't spend a great deal of time with kids in our school. He's been really supportive, like my [sports] team went to the Provincials, he came and watched, and he does that kind of stuff all the time. We have an awards banquet in June, he'll be there. When we have Christmas concerts, he's the one that they make a joke about. He has a great sense of humour and he's very much present on those special occasions, and he speaks well for the kids. He's *not* seen in the hallways, and so they have no sense of him. Whereas one of our vice-principals, is *very* visible. He's like a policeman but he's also the voice of reason and he's *always* there, and the kids know *who* he is and they listen. I think that if there was ever a strength that a principal should have then that's one of them -- being a very visible kind of person -- and that's to his detriment. Although with teachers he tends to be very visible, he's there at 7:30 in the morning having coffee with everybody. I think [the principal] is seen as somebody that -- especially right now when they're juggling timetables et cetera -- he'll do everything he can to save the people that he thinks are worthwhile. If he thinks you're a worker, and he thinks you get things done with kids, he cuts you slack in all kinds of different ways. Whether it's just being positive, or when you screw up not noticing your screw-ups. But if you *work* for [him] he let's you know about it. He's really good at saying "thank-you" on behalf of the school and the staff. He is not as personable as a lot of people talk about in Junior Highs, where they tend to have a really, a much closer relationship with principals. There's a little bit of a reserve, a little bit of a distance between him and lots of people on staff. I think that's because he is an administrator and that he's in his office much of the time, but he's politically astute. People trust that when he goes into district office et cetera, that he speaks for us, that he's not afraid to say what he thinks.

Q: How does he work to build that trust?

A: In staff meetings, I think in the first 2 years in our school people who are very, very organized and very, very concrete sequential would have been driven nuts because we had basically no policy. We had no attendance policy, we had no late policy, we had no policies for announcements, and what we have done is created policies as we've gone, and every staff meeting was like, "This is what's happening, you guys can have this much input. Here's the places you guys can make decisions. Now here's what we're going to talk about." And he has *always* done that. From the very start we made the decisions about how the school runs, the structures, the rules. Now that's a real catch-22 -- because once you make the rules you're stuck with them. But he has allowed *all* the people on his staff to help him make the decisions about rules. Nothing has come from the top in terms of being imposed. We have made those decisions together. And faculty council, which he works directly with, they are all the department heads, say the same thing, he *never* comes into a meeting with -- he always has probably got some kind of agenda -- you can change [his] mind. You can ask for some time to let it go. We have a no bell policy now, and he made a *great* deal of fun about that. He didn't want to do it. At the staff meeting we came up -- we had five different proposals -- he was losing his temper, he was losing his cool, you could see that he wanted this decision made. Finally we went with a 3-day trial run. He didn't really want to do it and he came back at the next meeting and said, "You guys were right, this works." And he does that, *often*. . . . I've had a really, I would say a fairly negative experience, but I don't think I'm unfounded in my feeling that most of the time the principals that I've worked with have had little understanding of what makes a school run, or how to make people become fairly effective teachers, but he's been the *best* I've ever had.

Appendix C

Reflective Journal Excerpts

Friday, May 8, 1992

The interviewees so far have been quite eager to participate. It seems as though everybody has a story to tell of one sort or another. Right now it seems like their stories fall into one of two broad categories: I'll call them "Horror stories" and "Hero stories" until I can come up with more appropriate terminology. Most people have had at least one negative experience that they want to relate -- or avoid talking about. Similarly, most have had one "good" principal that they want to describe. Several have used the term "effective" which I have not been using.

The most noticeable thing from the interviews at the moment is how people have describing what I would call "non-teaching characteristics" of the principal as being important. Several have mentioned clearly setting and conveying *goals* as being important. Many have also expressed the importance of teacher-recognition. One quote that I especially like for illustrating this is:

> Administrators have to "walk their talk" and the same talk that they give to kids, and that is that it doesn't take much to say "thank you," and usually dogs, or workers or however you want, do well with just a pat on the head, it doesn't need to be much, and that shouldn't be forgotten. [7,332-336]

Other teachers have expressed similar sentiments using different (and with less potential for offending) terms, but the importance is very clear -- the way to get good teaching is to thank the teachers for the work they're doing. Hmm, interesting thoughts.

The principal as a professional seems to be important too. This I've found to be quite interesting, as I hadn't really thought about it in relation to good teaching practices that much. But I am seeing a pattern developing.

There seems to be a bit of a difference amongst teachers in big (usually urban) schools and those in small schools. The role of the principal is very different in both, but at this point I'm beginning to wonder if the differences in teachers' views about the principals' actions in these two different settings is as great as I first thought. More study is needed here.

It's interesting how often people have talked about "the staff" as a whole as being important. In some cases more so than the principal it seems. Again, I have to look into this further.

Sunday, May 10, 1992

I continue to do the "chasing around" required for this stage of data collection as I get interviewees to verify their transcripts and make additions and so on. I have been pleasantly surprised at the apparent willingness of the interviewees to give further information. I have found it valuable to allow a period of time for them to reflect on the responses that they gave me in the initial interview. So far two of the latest round have said that they thought of further things that they wanted to tell me after the first interview. They both said, "I really got to thinking after having spoken with you," which I think is a good sign. The information I am seeking appears to be of interest to the teachers involved. I spoke briefly with "Lisa" tonight when I dropped off her transcript and she commented that she is really looking forward to reading my findings. That is encouraging.

Getting back to the follow-ups that I've been doing, I've found it beneficial to tape-record their additions in some cases in order to get fuller responses. They seem to appreciate it too because then they don't have to write up lengthy responses in the margins of the original transcript.

Wednesday, May 13, 1992

I have had a preliminary go-through of interviews 3 and 4 and have found it to be very time-consuming. The categories seem to be very inter-woven, so it will take a long time to 'pick them all apart.' At the moment the pattern I'm seeing is that Brad and Louise have described the things that effective principals have done, and the things that less effective principals haven't done.

Brad seemed to focus on the importance of the principals having goals for the school and clearly articulating them to the staff. It was also important to him that the principal get the staff to work together as a team. He referred a number of times to the principal as being the "boss" of the school, and he seemed to prefer those principals who "took charge" but gave teachers professional autonomy within their classrooms or departments. Both Brad and Louise have alluded to (or stated) the importance of principals acknowledging teachers' work by giving them some form of praise. I also know this has been mentioned in at least two of the other interviews so far, and I think that it may prove to be an important point. Brad spoke a lot about "the big picture" and how his more effective principals did things to make sure that teachers worked together for the betterment of the whole school. Both Brad and Louise have said that when the influence of a principal who holds teachers accountable is removed there is a tendency to backslide (my term). This has happened in a few different ways, either by a change of administration, or a teacher transferring to a school with a different administrator, or due to changes or occurrences in a principal's personal life that caused some form of change in the principal's actions. Both Brad and Louise indicated that their "good" principals have had some form of lasting effect of them after they have come under a new administration, however, without the reinforcement, they say that there is a tendency to backslide as discussed earlier. Brad talks about how the more effective principals made themselves more visible to students and staff. Others too have referred to principals "staying in the office," so I think that this may prove to be a significant point as well. . . .

Appendix D

Summary of Preliminary Data Analysis

SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore what actions of the principal teachers identify as being important in establishing and sustaining good teaching practices. Eight experienced teachers from different Alberta schools were selected to participate in the research, and a semi-structured interview format was used to collect the information. The data were examined according to the categories and themes that emerged during a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts.

Teachers' stories fell under two major headings: "Establishing and Sustaining Good Teaching" and "The Administrator." Within these groups were five main categories and numerous sub-categories of information. In addition, five identifiable themes were interwoven throughout the data. This is a summary of the draft data-analysis document (~70 pages in length).

CATEGORIES

Establishing and Sustaining Good Teaching

Setting the Stage was the preliminary background work that teachers said principals needed to do to enable "good" teaching to occur in the schools. Having a "vision" or "plan" for the school was important in order to give it some direction, and so that all staff members could work together toward some "common goal." Some teachers referred to the staff working together "as a team," and talked about how principals nurtured a team spirit. Teachers needed to know "where the principal was coming from" and what the "boundaries" were in the school so that they could gauge their actions and reactions. Many teachers talked about the importance of having input into decisions, and feeling like their ideas and opinions were "listened to" by the principal.

The Teaching Act had to do with those things teachers saw principals doing specifically related to the teaching act. They described principals having high expectations of their staffs, and related various ways in which this message was sent to teachers, ranging from "subtle" to "very direct." Some teachers spoke of the strains and extra pressure that high expectations sometimes caused for them. Opinions varied widely on the importance of the principals' knowledge of the curriculum, a factor perhaps due to different school sizes. Some teachers talked about principals knowing the curriculum very well, and "could call you on anything," whereas others felt that the principal's knowledge of the curriculum had absolutely no bearing on what went on in the classroom. Most teachers felt that it was important for the principal to be visible and to be aware of what was going on in the school and in classrooms. They described many different ways in which that was accomplished, most common was the informal "drop-in." Teachers said that drop-ins accomplished several things, among those identified were: accountability; improved morale; teacher motivation; "awareness"; and keeping "in touch." Informal visits were generally seen as more beneficial than formal evaluations. In addition to actions related to expectations, seven of the eight teachers referred in some way to the concept of staff development and identified various ways their principals approached the topic. Some told of formal P.D. sessions that were made available or that they were encouraged to attend. Others focused on less structured activities that their principals had engaged in to try and improve their staffs' effectiveness. Two teachers expressed a concern over recent budgetary support for their programs. In one case it was deemed inadequate to meet the expectations that were being set. In the other there was frustration over budgetary requests being frequently questioned by the principal -- a factor which led to a feeling that one's professional judgement was being called into question.

Make Them Feel Good addressed issues of school climate and teachers feeling like they had support in the workplace. The importance of teacher recognition was directly addressed by four teachers in the study. A very distinct pattern emerged during the analysis, the first group of responses dealt with the concept of saying "thank-you." Teachers described a variety of different ways that their principals had done this, ranging from verbal comments and hand-written notes to other tokens of appreciation for their hard work. While emphasizing the importance of saying thank-you, several teachers expressed the sentiment that "It doesn't take much to make us happy." The second group of responses having to do with teacher recognition dealt with the "fairness" of preparation time allocations and extra-curricular responsibilities. The issue of time-compensation for extra-curricular duties came up in several interviews, and one teacher drew a sharp distinction between her experiences in rural and urban schools. Several teachers discussed concerns over morale, and two participants talked of the "trickle-effect" of mental health in a school. Often morale problems arose when schools underwent a significant change. These and other respondents articulated a number of different ways that principals tackled morale issues, and drew attention to the varied responses teachers had to the principals' actions. Some principals encouraged school-wide activities and theme days to help make people feel better. One principal issued a memo telling staff to improve morale, another "didn't deal with the issues, but he made people feel good." Some principals were successful in improving morale, others less so. Several teachers referred to different staffs that they had worked with as a "team" or as a "family," and some talked about ways that the principal attempted to enhance that relationship. These teachers related "fun staffroom" stories and descriptions of various social functions that staffs engaged in as a group. In most cases the principal was a part of such events.

The Administrator

When asked to discuss the types of things they see principals doing to sustain good teaching practices, teachers would often provide rich descriptions of the principals themselves. Some spoke with such passion that the issues they brought up warranted examination in a separate section of its own.

The Person is a broad category in which teachers related stories of positive and negative experiences with different principals. They had much to say about the administrator as an individual. Six of the teachers talked about their interpersonal relationships with the principal. Many seemed to favour getting to know the principal as an individual and doing things together as a staff, yet most expressed a desire for the principal to maintain a certain "distance" from the staff. Both positive and negative attitudes were displayed toward administrators that did "everything by-the-book." Four teachers felt that the way principals viewed their jobs as administrators of schools was important. Comparisons were often made between those principals who treated the position like a "reward" and those who worked hard to "facilitate" the work of others. Two teachers talked about the importance of the principal "liking" kids and being willing to "get back in the classroom," and equated these actions with effectiveness. Most teachers wanted the principal to be "approachable," yet several made a distinction between approachability and being "buddy, buddy." This latter characteristic was not viewed very favourably by teachers. Strong interpersonal skills were a trait identified as important by several participants in the study. When invited to discuss what had made particular principals effective, teachers sometimes had difficulty articulating their thoughts. Several times they spoke of the individual's "personality." Despite principals having the knowledge required to carry out the tasks of their position, teachers felt that administrators needed to possess certain other qualities in order for them to achieve success as school principals. "Professionalism" was spoken of quite often, however this seemed to mean different things to different teachers. The principal's attitude, appearance, and ways of dealing with other individuals were the main examples usually given. Often teachers would describe at least one principal that did not meet the criterion of being "professional" while making comparisons with one that did. In addition to professional characteristics, principals' personal characteristics were often mentioned. Honesty, fairness, being "up front," trustworthy and "true blue" were some of the "virtues" of better principals that were mentioned by teachers. In discussing the principals' actions with respect to the day-to-day operations of the school, teachers illustrated a tremendous range in the diversity of the views held. Their responses showed that different managerial actions held varying levels of importance for individual people. Several teachers indicated that the way in which staff meetings were conducted was important, especially with respect to the issue of teacher input. Choice of modes of communication between principal and teachers was mentioned, as was the principals' ability to build rapport with the community. One teacher expressed frustration with "human relations operators" who "didn't deal with the issues." The concept of trust was interwoven throughout the transcripts, and again meant different things to different teachers. Many teachers found it easier to talk about those times when trust had been absent. In this vein, teachers sometimes would distinguish between trust and respect. Both of these elements sometimes contributed to teachers' decisions to leave the school. The concept of actions not matching words was brought up several times as an example of behaviour that damaged the trust relationship between teacher and principal. Similarly, not respecting confidences or "going through the proper channels," being too "buddy, buddy" and various non-verbal cues were also identified as damaging to the relationship. The most commonly referred-to action when discussing trust issues was the principal being supportive of the teacher when dealing with difficult parents or students. Teachers wanted principals to "back them up" at these times.

The Educator was the category dealing with comments respondents made about their principals as teachers. A few had not worked with principals who taught classes and were unable to comment. Teachers discussed a number of benefits accruing from having a principal who taught. Being "in touch" with students and understanding teachers' instructional concerns were the main ones identified. The principal's choice of subject to teach was sometimes considered an important factor. For many teachers in the study, it was important for principals to give the impression that they were hard workers. Comments to this effect were often linked with those having to do with "leading by example." Teachers provided many examples of principals who had had an impact on teaching practices by "setting an example" for the rest of the staff. Participants often reflected back to their early years of teaching when talking about how their principals had (or had not) given them assistance as a teacher. Several spoke of needing guidance in the early years to "get off on the right foot." Sporadic remarks were made throughout the transcripts about principals who did or did not have "control" in their schools. Few teachers spent a significant time directly talking about the administrator and discipline. The concept was subtly interwoven with many different actions of the principal. The need for consistency and stability were sometimes spoken of, as were leading by example and being visible and aware.

THEMES

Below is a summary of the five themes that were embedded in the interview data:

Heros and Villains. Teachers had a tendency to relate their stories of principals' actions in terms of "heros" and "villains." Their vivid recollections of events bore testimony to the lasting impact that these individuals had made on participants. Rarely did teachers provide much detail about principals who fell in the "grey middle ground" between the two extremes.

School as Workplace. All teachers alluded to the importance of the school as a workplace. Their views were entwined in discussions throughout the transcripts, but were most evident when relating stories connected with staff morale and climate, or in descriptions of the principal as an individual.

Professional Autonomy. Although they wanted the principal to be visible and aware, most teachers alluded to the importance of being "left alone" to do the job that they were hired to do. The issue of control was also embedded within this theme -- most evident when participants talked about decision-making processes.

I need to feel valued. This theme was closely linked with the one above. Teachers expressed the need to be valued in a number of different ways. Teacher recognition, feeling like their input "counted," and being made to feel as though they were "part of a team" were some of the main ways in which this need was expressed.

I need to feel supported. Revealed in various ways, this theme was prevalent throughout the interview transcripts of all participants. Teachers needed to know that the principal was in the school to act as a facilitator of their work. Support could be shown in many different ways, in particular, teachers needed to know that the principal would "back them up" in certain situations with parents or students.

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Collectively, the teachers in this study described their experiences with over forty different principals. Although there were many commonalities amongst their responses, the data illustrate the tremendous diversity of the views that teachers held. The richness and depth of their responses will help readers to develop a greater awareness of the "multiple realities" that exist in schools today.